School of Theology at Claremont
1001 1336235

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

ARTHUR CHANDLER

ANGLICAN LIBRARY OF FAITH & THOUGHT

75

Theology Library

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
California

From the library of

ANGLICAN LIBRARY OF FAITH AND THOUGHT

Edited by LEONARD PRESTIGE, B.D.
Rector of Upper Heyford, Oxon.

CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

A

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO. LTD.
39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, E.C.4
6 OLD COURT HOUSE STREET, CALCUTTA
53 NICOL ROAD, BOMBAY
167 MOUNT ROAD, MADRAS

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.
55 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK
221 EAST 20TH STREET, CHICAGO
TREMONT TEMPLE, BOSTON
128-132 UNIVERSITY AVENUE, TORONTO

CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

BR
110
C4

BY

ARTHUR CHANDLER

RECTOR OF BENTLEY S. MARY, FARNHAM
FORMERLY BISHOP OF BLOEMFONTEIN

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.
LONDON ▫ NEW YORK ▫ TORONTO

1929

University of Southern California Library

Made in Great Britain

Religion 201.6 C455c

Transferred Methodist World Service Fund

EDITORIAL FOREWORD

A FEW words seem desirable to explain the publication of a series of books, some of which may appear to differ widely in character from others, under the common title of the Anglican Library of Faith and Thought. The general intention is to offer a systematic treatment of some of the facts of religious experience and history, in such a manner as to illustrate the principles involved or implied in them. The authors invited to contribute to this series are men of thought, who would all attach a high value to the historical continuity and intellectual tradition of the Christian Church, but are at the same time fully conscious of the need for independent judgment and for sympathetic understanding of modern problems and processes. The books are not technical handbooks, but aim at presenting facts intelligently to the educated public, without any sacrifice of interest and attractiveness.

It should be said that the original suggestion of the series was made by the Literature Committee of the English Church Union, a body of some fifty well-known scholars of the Anglican Communion. But the Union assumes no responsibility for any more than the projection of the series and the appointment, jointly with Messrs. Longmans, Green and Company, of the Editor. Detailed responsibility rests entirely with the several

authors, subject only to the Editor's general oversight : and that oversight has been exercised of set purpose with a view to the production of works which in the Editor's judgment are of value in tending to promote clear thought upon important subjects, rather than with a view to obtaining finality of statement upon matters in which a claim to finality might possibly savour of intellectual presumption.

The Editor ventures to express the hope that when its purpose is understood in this sense the series may prove of real value in a generation which from its various circumstances both needs and demands clear and serious thinking about the fundamental concerns of religion.

G.L.P.

PREFACE

IN considering the character of Christian Experience I have divided the subject into two parts. The first discusses the question of its validity or objective truth, and the factors which go to form it; the second is occupied with the different forms which it takes in the Christian life, and the different phases through which it passes.

In dealing with these various phases I have tried, as far as possible, to avoid technical terms and scientific formulas and definitions, partly because I think they often tend to darken counsel and become a substitute, instead of an incentive, for thought, and partly because they seem to ignore an essential characteristic of spiritual life. This, like all life, is fluid and variable, manifold and elusive; as such, it escapes the categories which attempt to arrest and stabilise it at fixed points; and it appears, further, not only as a stream, but as a stream which refuses to run a straight course to the ocean, being subject to eddies and backwaters and meanderings, which are an additional source of trouble to the maker of abstract theories. It seems to be best to abandon any attempt to subject it to scientific treatment, and to be content to watch it as it bubbles up fresh and vigorous, at the touch of the Spirit, from the deepest springs of our nature, and to trace its course past all sorts of obstacles, and under all sorts

of colouring from cloud and sunshine, until at last it finds an outlet into the "peaceful" sea of God's glory.

By the courtesy of the Editor of the *Church Quarterly Review* I have been able to use, mainly in Part One of this Essay, certain portions of an article which I contributed to the July, 1927, number. My obligations to various writers are, I hope, duly acknowledged in the course of the book.

CONTENTS

PART I

THE NATURE AND VALIDITY OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	EXPERIENCE AND BELIEF	1
II.	RATIONAL BASIS OF EXPERIENCE	16
III.	INTERACTION OF EXPERIENCE AND BELIEF	25

PART II

PHASES OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

	(*a*) *ASPIRATION*	
IV.	EMOTION	43
V.	IMAGINATION AND REFLECTION	46
VI.	OTHER-WORLDLINESS	50
	(*b*) *DISCIPLINE*	
VII.	CONVERSION AND SPECULATION	55
VIII.	RENUNCIATION	63
IX.	PENITENCE	69
	(*c*) *FELLOWSHIP*	
X.	CITIZENSHIP	80
XI.	COMMUNION	88
XII.	UNION	101
	NOTE ON THE HOLY SPIRIT	110

PART I

THE NATURE AND VALIDITY OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

I

EXPERIENCE AND BELIEF

CHRISTIAN experience may be defined as the awareness of a relationship of the soul to God. It is compounded of feeling and intelligence, and its character varies according to the manner in which these two factors interact and affect each other, and the relative importance attached to each. The experience will take various forms ; it will appear as aspiration after God ; as joy and peace in a sense of fellowship with Him ; as awe and reverence ; as conviction of sin and unworthiness ; as comfort and encouragement found in prayer and sacrament ; as conquest of temptation, and advance in Christian character ; as devotion to God's service ; as communion with Him, and a listening for indications of His will.

This religious experience of Christendom, which has appeared in every age and country, is the subject to be considered. As we look at it, certain questions at once suggest themselves. We have to ask, How does the experience arise ? In what sense is it true and trustworthy ? How can it be fostered and developed ? what lines does it follow, and in what order do they come ?

Well, we will begin at the lowest level by pointing out that these spiritual experiences are obviously *real*, in the sense that they are actually felt ; they have, as a matter of fact, occurred, and we have been conscious of them. In this sense they are on the same level of actuality as an emotion of anger, a desire for happiness,

an appreciation of beauty, or an intention of the will. There is no doubt whatever about the reality, or actual occurrence, of these experiences; and the Christian experiences have their place alongside of them. An aspiration after God, and a sense of union with God, are facts that can no more be denied than any of the other experiences just mentioned.

But in none of these cases is the mind content to rest in its experiences as mere psychical events; it goes on to examine them; to investigate their origin, and assess the degree of rationality and validity which they can claim. From this point of view some of them may be condemned: happiness may be sought where it cannot be found; the anger may be felt from some mistake; the sense of beauty may be seen to be crude and uneducated, and the intention of the will to be directed to something which does not exist. So, too, Christian experience will be incontestably real, in the sense that it has been actually experienced; but its worth and significance depend on its being real in another sense, the sense of being true or objectively valid, and referring to an outside object which actually exists. Thus, religious experience cannot, by itself, be regarded as carrying with it a guarantee of objective truth. In itself, it is a private, subjective feeling, and must, in the first place, be objectified; be presented in a rational form, so that its claim to full reality may be considered and assessed. "The feeling taken by itself," says Professor Aliotta, "is a modification of my subjective consciousness, which gives me only the experience of itself"; and again, "Feeling alone is impotent to bring us out of subjectivity, as it easily degenerates into individual choice. Every individual, in fact, will be able to create for himself his own religion, and there are innumerable varieties of religious experience."[1]

[1] Essay in *Science, Religion and Reality*, p. 176.

In the second place, then, it appears that our religious experience, if it is to win acceptance and recognition from other people, must not only be psychically real, in the sense of being actually felt, but also objectively true, with a validity established on rational grounds. Its claim to possess this objective truth is what we have now to consider. In doing so, we note at the outset the very significant fact that in all these religious experiences there is an " objective reference " ; that is, the experience always presents itself, and insists on presenting itself, not merely as something which arises in the person's mind, as an idea or desire or aspiration of his own, but as an act in which the mind is reaching up to and apprehending some Being above and beyond itself, with whom it can hold intercourse.

Now, this reference to an outside Power, a reference implicit in all religious experience, is itself an inchoate form of belief, and history justifies us in asserting that belief of some sort, varying from crude superstition to an intelligent system of convictions, lies at the root of anything that can be called *religious* experience. In very early days the belief seems to have been nothing more than an uneasy and disturbing recognition of mysterious powers acting in unaccountable ways in the world of nature, and the experience to have been nothing more than a vague and intense feeling of dread and nervous scrupulosity, such as inspired Caliban in his attitude to Setebos. Similarly, the Jewish belief in Israel's privileged position and its reverence for the Mosaic Law and the traditions of the elders had its outcome in the narrow and legalistic character of their religious experience. In the same way, the experience of Christians is evoked and coloured by their beliefs. Belief is the source from which it has sprung, and peculiarities and eccentricities of experience are often traceable to corresponding qualities in the accepted beliefs. Of course the Chris-

tian belief which thus elicits experience will vary greatly in respect of quality and depth; in children it will be a simple, uncritical acceptance, at second hand, of beliefs inculcated by parents or teachers, and the resulting experience will mostly consist in the stirring of emotions of wonder and awe. But on this, as on other levels, it is true that the experience implies some prior belief as that from which it takes its rise. This principle is, indeed, especially clear in the case of Christianity. Christianity is a historical religion, and its records shew that the acceptance of certain alleged events as true was that which gave rise to the Christian experience described above.

Belief, then, of some sort, evokes religious experience, and determines in a very real sense the lines which it will follow. And we note, as a further stage in the process of development, that this religious experience, when reflected upon, interprets itself back into doctrinal tenets which may be expounded and presented to others in rational form and be articulated by theology into a systematic creed. It would seem, then, that in the first instance belief elicits experience, and that then experience, in its turn, gives conceptual expression to itself in the form of doctrinal tenets. We may take a rough illustration of this sequence from what we find in the New Testament. In St. Mark's Gospel we have a simple, direct, non-speculative statement of observed events; belief in these facts gave rise to the religious experience of the primitive Church and to the fellowship in which it lived; and, later on, this experience expressed itself in the Epistles of St. Paul and the Gospel of St. John with their dogmatic and mystical systems of theology. It is probably this latter fact, the emergence of theology from experience which is in the mind of those writers who maintain the thesis that experience is prior to, and creates, belief; but they seem sometimes to forget that if, for instance, the

fourth Gospel is moulded by Christian experience, Christian experience itself was prompted by the second Gospel, or some earlier statement of belief which may have been incorporated into it. The experience, then, was evoked by belief, and in its turn elicited theology; and it is clear that both the evoking belief and the elicited theology embody a work of reason; whilst, lastly, reason has a further function to perform in establishing the trustworthiness of the original beliefs, and in giving the theology its place in a comprehensive view of the universe.

Only when this work has been carried through, and these tests have been passed, can religious experience be held to have finally won its way to the domain of rational and objective truth. Thus Professor Whitehead writes, "Rational religion is religion whose beliefs and rituals have been reorganised with the aim of making it the central element in a coherent ordering of life—an ordering which shall be coherent both in respect to the elucidation of thought, and in respect to the direction of conduct towards a unified purpose commanding ethical approval." And, again, "Religion claims that its concepts, though derived primarily from special experience, are yet of universal validity, to be applied by faith to the ordering of all experience."[1]

A great deal of testing and manipulation by reason has thus to be done before religious experience has established itself as religious truth; and to ignore or disparage these rational implications of religion would be a disastrous, and indeed a suicidal policy.

But if religious experience depends, for its objective validity, on its relation to rational belief, it is equally true to say that much of the value and significance of belief, in its theological stage, lies in its power to interpret and express and sift the data of experience.

[1] *Religion in the Making*, pp. 20–1.

We may apply here Kant's dictum, and say that the experience without belief would be blind, and that the belief without experience would be empty. The two factors go together and supplement each other. Belief supplies an intellectual prompting and verification of experience, and gives it a context in a system of objective truth; and experience gives a practical verification of belief, and attests its value as a guide to life. We shall be considering later the specific contribution made by each to the Christian religion; here it is enough to insist that neither can dispense with the other. If we were simply to hold a brief for experience, and regard belief just as something which expresses experience without eliciting or criticising or controlling it, our religion would lack the quality of universality and rational validity which it ought to possess. We should be making it a private possession of our own, and shall be behaving like the servants of the King of Israel who started spoiling the tents of the Syrians for their own profit, instead of spreading the good news to those in the city. On the other hand, if we put an exaggerated emphasis on rational belief, and dismiss experience contemptuously as mere feeling, as something fluctuating and contingent and irrelevant, we shall be constructing a well-articulated system of theology, which will be intelligible to all and not of much interest to any.

The truth would seem to lie in a body of experience prompted and justified by rational beliefs; an inward experience of God and His working, supported and approved by the records of Christ's character and teaching, by the consentient testimony of the Saints, by the witness it bears to a moral and spiritual government of the world, and by its effect on the lives and conduct of those who receive it.

The first two of these considerations go together. The testimony of the Saints (who are the experts in

spiritual experience) rests throughout on the teaching and life of Christ; and the force of that testimony lies in the fact that a multitude of people of different ages and countries, people utterly different in temperament and worldly position and mental capacity, share the same experience. Of course, as we shall notice later, the experience of different Saints emphasises different aspects of the "truth as it is in Jesus," but it combines together to form a coherent picture, and is presented as such by the Church. Their experience is an experience of a vital union with Him, by which their faith is transmuted into a burning love and devotion. The depth and sincerity of this experience are undoubted facts, but its evidential value, that is, its ability to justify and establish our own aspirations after a similar union, must depend on the further question whether this belief in the teaching and character, the spiritual authority and moral perfection of Christ, is founded on actual fact.

We cannot attempt here to deal with such a question, beyond making one or two suggestions which seem germane to our subject. It is obvious that such a belief rests on rational grounds; in fact, it involves a twofold work of reason, in the spheres of philosophy and of history; of philosophy as well as of history. For we all come to the study of history with certain preconceptions as to what is and what is not believable; that is, with a certain criterion of credibility. If we are to believe in Christ as an authoritative teacher, the belief must rest not only on the historical record of His life, but also, and in the first instance, on a background of theistic philosophy; in other words, we must be prepared to accept the reality of supernatural objects and events if they should prove to be adequately attested, instead of setting them aside as antecedently and inherently incredible. Let us, then, go back to first principles, and recognise that, if we

are to form any intelligent conception of the world, we must regard it as a *coherent* and *comprehensive* whole. It must be coherent, must hang together as a unity; whatever diversity there may be in its various elements, they must be fused and inter-related by an inner unity which runs through them and explains them. And this principle, tacitly or explicitly accepted, flows from the unity of our own intelligence; we cannot accept discordant elements in our conception of world-truth without being in discord with ourselves; this is, indeed, the source from which the Law of Contradiction flows. The world-system must be coherent, because otherwise it would not conform to the requirements of our intelligence.

It follows from this that we must not recognise independent and mutually hostile and repellent spheres of truth, each entrenched in its separate fastness, and refusing to take account of the others. The cosmos is a great organic whole in which the different planes of reality are interlaced and united in an ascending scale of progressive reality, extending from inorganic "things" up to spiritual beings, and on to a supreme Spirit who fuses and maintains the whole. And such a conception, which satisfies our demands for unity of truth, seems to be increasingly recognised as valid by the prominent leaders of scientific thought to-day.[1] But, again, the world-system must not only be coherent, but comprehensive also. It must be true to all the facts of knowledge; not leave out any of them in order to arrive more easily at a unity. It must not be a closed system, shutting its doors to unwelcome or inconvenient visitors; it must, on the contrary, invite them all, from whatever quarter they come,

[1] I tried, from the side of religion, to express something of this interconnectedness of truth in *Scala Mundi* (1920), and am most grateful to Father Lionel Thornton for his very learned and thorough treatment of the subject in *The Incarnate Lord.*

and however diverse their credentials may be. And here again it is we who lay down the laws to truth; the truth is *our* truth; and, just as the coherence of the system is demanded by the unity of our reason, so the comprehensiveness of the system is demanded by the complexity of our nature, which comprises will and affections as well as reason. It is our whole concrete personality which is the lawgiver here, and any conception of the world which does not satisfy this is self-condemned as abstract and unreal. Reality is a construction of our personality, and the validity of the construction will depend on its ability to satisfy our personality as a whole. The reality which we build up must not only be intelligible to our reason, but lovable by our affections, and stimulating to our will. The arid barrenness of most philosophy lies in making rationality the sole test of truth, and in regarding reality as the successful solution of an intellectual problem. Reality has, indeed, to constitute a rational and coherent whole, but its coherence does not consist in the fact that it rejects apparently refractory elements, but in the fact that they are fused and reconciled and included. It is dynamic, not static merely; and its dynamic aspect lies in its complying with the demand that it shall respond to the affections and the will, as well as the intelligence, of man. Moral and spiritual factors must be comprehended, not squeezed out or explained away, if our world-view is to be a satisfactory one.

And if these considerations point, as they do, to God as the central principle of a universe which can satisfy the demands of our personality,[1] they will also affect the conception which we form of God's nature. We shall not think of Him, as our "intellec-

[1] Dr. Valentine, in the introduction to his *Modern Psychology and the Validity of Christian Experience* has some valuable remarks on the relation of truth to personality.

tualists" naturally tend to do, as a Being of pure intellect engaged in the otiose and, surely, tiresome, contemplation of a fixed and finished system of unchanging fact, but as One who is perpetually making all things new by the exercise of the love and volition which go along with His reason. God exists, indeed, beyond and above the world, but He exists also in the world which His will created and His love sustains. He is the perfect Being, the true Reality, who encompasses us on every side, satisfying all our capacities, and drawing us to Himself with cords of love. The Reality, then, which alone can satisfy us must have a personal character, and can only be found in a personal God, the perfection of love and power as well as knowledge.

When we contemplate Christ against this theistic background, He appears to us not as an enigmatic figure suddenly protruded into the midst of a materialistic system—a figure which we should inevitably try to explain away on materialistic principles—but as a figure which harmonises with, and expresses, the true conception of Reality. If we accept God as the one supreme and comprehensive Reality, it will be natural for us to see in Christ an identity of being with Him, and to believe that He taught spiritual truth with the infallibility and authority that belong to God; and such a conviction would seem to be amply confirmed by a study of the picture given in the Gospels. Christian experience, then, is confirmed by the testimony of the Saints, which is accepted and co-ordinated by the Church, and by the authoritativeness which we may rightly ascribe to the teaching of their Master.

And what we have just written leads on to the third ground for the acceptance of this experience. We have argued that no theory of the universe can be comprehensive and satisfactory which does not take

due account of the moral and spiritual, as well as of the intellectual, factors of human nature; that consequently a theistic philosophy holds the field against all rivals, and that such a philosophy culminates naturally and rationally in an acceptance of the revelation of God in Christ and His teaching. But if our moral and spiritual endowment demands adequate recognition in a world-philosophy, a strong argument for the validity of Christian experience lies in the fact that this experience bears unhesitating witness to the actual working of a supreme spiritual power, who is "Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love," in the hearts of men and in the government of the world, and points clearly to an ultimate "rightness in things" in the world as "a realm of adjusted values"[1]; to the essential friendliness of the universe, and to the approval and support which this gives to aspirations after God the great "philanthropist." Browning's declaration that "God's in His heaven, all's right with the world" is often dismissed scornfully as a bit of shallow optimism, ignoring the overwhelming evidence of evil. No man alive is the least likely, least of all to-day, to ignore the presence and power of evil which confronts him every hour, but it is something to be assured that the ultimate power of the universe is on the side of rightness, and is actively interested in the triumph of rightness over wrongness everywhere; and that is the assurance which Browning gives. It is a feeling that underlies all Christian experience, which, through the feeling of the nearness of that power, proclaims with Julian of Norwich "all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well." There is great strength in Canon Quick's argument that "the religious fact and the religious experience are unique and inexplicable and manifestly God-given precisely in this, that they shed such wonderful

[1] *Religion in the Making*, pp. 49 and 55.

illumination upon the whole plan of reality. Here in religious facts and religious experiences, sifted and criticised by the whole activity of the human mind, we discover something of unique worth—namely, a particular concrete fact and reality of experience, which illuminates all others and reveals their meaning. The claim of certain facts and certain experiences to give us God, or to be the direct result of divine action, is justified precisely by this evidence, that through them as through no others we discern the ultimate order and significance of all. Their mysterious inexplicability is after all but the reverse side of their explanatoriness."[1] That is, the very strangeness of the religious experience, its mysterious strength and resilience, the impossibility of explaining it away, enable it to throw light upon the ultimate nature of the universe and the true significance of human life. The religious experience of a Christian may claim, then, as a strong argument in its favour that it repudiates, as a one-sided abstraction, any materialistic view of the world, and upholds the reality of spiritual Being as its central, comprehensive and explanatory principle.

The last consideration by which spiritual experience may claim to be justified is by its effects on the character and conduct of those who have it. This argument is a weighty one; the number of people whose lives have been changed and permanently rebuilt on good and unselfish principles through their awareness of God's presence and guidance, is very great indeed. Their conversion from wrongness to rightness has been clear and thorough and sustained.

Of course, a good moral life is often lived, and conversion sometimes effected, on non-religious lines. Firm ethical principles and a strong will can naturally issue in moral conduct; this will be freely admitted

[1] An article in *Theology*, November, 1927, pp. 253–4.

by everyone, and is irrelevant to my argument. Religious experience, with which we are here concerned, is in itself not ethical but spiritual; it aims directly at God; it is the aspiration of the soul to Him; "my soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God: when shall I come to appear before the presence of God?" "God is its sole ultimate rest, sole pure delight. Religion, as distinct from ethics, flies straight at once to this great ultimate fact, to this unique personalist reality, to God as Beatitude and Beatifier. Thus the religious soul, in proportion to the strength of its religion, always reaches beyond all abstract law, all mere sense of duty and obligation."[1] Our point is that an experience which thus "flies straight to God" justifies itself in the eyes of men by the moral fruits which it produces. An experience which raises the soul to a supra-moral sphere is exhibited also in unselfish character and conduct, and may fairly claim this fact as an argument in its favour; and I hope I shall not be guilty of bigoted partisanship if I add that a moral life proceeding from such a source is usually of a more patient, loving, stable and sympathetic type than one based on purely ethical principles.

Two objections against the alleged moral outcome of spiritual experience must be alluded to, though they proceed really from a misunderstanding of what is meant by such experience. In the first place, attention is drawn to the fact that revivalist missions often produce a type of conversion which consists simply in strong temporary feeling neither guided by rational belief nor issuing in moral character. Such feeling is essentially unstable; and, violent at the outset, often dies away altogether or seeks satisfaction and rekindling in non-religious and non-moral outbursts

[1] Baron von Hügel, *Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion*, Second series, p. 221.

of passion. But it is obvious that such aberrations cannot be fairly laid to the charge of spiritual experience. On the contrary, such people never rise above the narrow groove of their own sensuous plane; they never get to God at all. They are stirred and excited by an emotional appeal, to which they make an emotional response, without their minds being guided to God or their wills enlisted in His service.

Secondly, it is sometimes objected that some religious people are not, in matter of fact conspicuous for altruism and unselfishness in their daily lives; that they are more remarkable for the regularity of their religious observances in church or chapel than for charity and helpfulness to their neighbour. And such an observation is unfortunately quite true. Religion is often swallowed up in ecclesiasticism, as elsewhere in emotionalism, and does not produce the practical fruit which ought to grow out of it. But here, again, such decadence is not an indication of the worthlessness of religious experience, but an indication of its absence. These people, like the others, are not lifting up their souls to God, but are immersed in self, in the gratification of their own needs or the pursuit of their own comforts. St. Catherine of Siena has a scathing criticism of people who "see their neighbour in some spiritual or temporal need and refrain from succouring him, and this under colour of virtue, saying, 'I should lose thereby my mental peace and quiet, and not be saying my prayers at the right time." They offend God more "by not succouring their neighbour than by abandoning all their private consolations." And these words are not written by a worldling scoffing at religion, but by one of the greatest contemplative Saints who ever lived, and nearly the whole of whose short life was spent in prayer of some sort. The soul, she explains, was created for the perfect, disinterested,

love of God and man, not for its private comforts and consolations.[1]

When, then, the soul is aspiring towards God as its end, it will manifest also love of its neighbour. Where there is real spiritual experience, the result will be evident in character and in conduct towards others.

[1] *Dialogue of Divine Providence*, Chapter lxix.

II

RATIONAL BASIS OF EXPERIENCE

HISTORY, philosophy, and reflection, then, may all be cited as witnesses to the reality of religious experience. But all three are embodiments of the work of reason, and at the present time it seems especially important to insist on this fact—on the rational aspect of religion, or the rational acceptance of facts and principles as the fount from which experience proceeds and the authority by which it is organised and assessed. No doubt in former days the importance of the intellectual side of religion has been exaggerated, but to-day the tendency is in the opposite direction; there is now a strong inclination to disparage reason and to exalt feeling and instinct, and subjective experience in general, as the factor of supreme importance.

This bias is by no means confined to the sphere of religion; it issues in a comprehensive philosophy, yielding a theory of knowledge and a system of ethics. On the religious plane, the tendency is exhibited, as was suggested in the last chapter, in theories which posit experience as something practically independent of belief, or rather which subordinate belief to experience, treating it as a corollary from experience, and as having little value or significance except in so far as it "expresses" or "mediates" experience. This view maintains that we start with experience, and find on reflection that certain beliefs seem to be implied in it, or be congruous to it; the belief thus presents

itself as a subsequent illustration or explanation of a previous experience. The assumption throughout appears to be that it is the experience which really matters; that in the order of thought and of time belief depends upon experience, and is useful just in so far as it reaffirms experience in a conceptual form.

Thus Mr. Spens, the distinguished Master of Corpus, who is a prominent exponent of this theory, writes, "the authoritative element in the Christian religion is precisely the value of these conceptions (the Incarnation and the Atonement) for religious experience"[1]; belief being regarded as ancillary, and its value depending on its power to give coherence and explanation to the dicta of experience, which have an independent value of their own. Moreover it is even suggested that devotional experience is so self-sufficing that it could be profitably continued even if it depends on false beliefs: "even if this conception (of a supernatural Christ) were untrue, we cannot get away from its proved value as a guide to religious experience"; and, again, "a sounder conception of theology should enable us to embody practices which have appeared to depend on untenable doctrines, but which are found to result in a rich devotional life."[2] It is true that Mr. Spens recognises in other passages that some belief must be posited as a basis for these devotional benefits, as when he writes that "the existence of God, and our relation to Him, is directly affirmed as the basis of the experience in question"; but undoubtedly his main object is to proclaim a doctrine of religious "empiricism," asserting the supremacy of experience and the humble service rendered to it by belief.

There seem to be three serious objections to be raised against this point of view. In the first place it

[1] *Belief and Practice*, p. 87.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 88 and 89.

appears, as has been suggested before, to invert the order in which belief and experience stand to each other. It may be legitimate to treat dogmas as inferences from experience, but the experience itself implies a previous belief in certain facts as true, and could never have arisen independently of that belief.

Secondly, if belief really depended upon experience for its origin and credentials, it would have been something too variable, contingent and uncertain in character to possess any firm outlines or objective significance. Even at the present time devotional experience arising in revivalist meetings or popular cults makes disturbing and revolutionary demands for the official recognition and sanction of theology; and if such demands had, at the beginning, controlled and directed Christian belief, it would be hard to understand how an ordered and coherent system of Catholic theology could ever have resulted or been maintained.

And, thirdly, the theory that belief is thus subordinate to experience seems to be at bottom a doctrine of pure pragmatism. It tells us that people experience a variety of religious feelings, such as contrition, repentance, joy, hope, confidence, aspiration; that they feel strongly the importance of them, and consequently are ready to accept some facts capable of explaining them and guaranteeing their spiritual validity. A judgment of value dictates a judgment of truth, or is prepared, on occasion, to dispense with it altogether. But truth ought not to be relegated to such a secondary position as that in any sphere, religious or otherwise.

I need hardly say that it is not my object to disparage or underestimate the value of experience in the sphere of religion; on the contrary I regard it as constituting the very life of religion. Without the ring of personal experience, religion would be a very dry and uninteresting affair. But if this experience is to be some-

thing on which we can rest securely, and which can possess evidential value for other people, it must not be left to itself; it must be subjected to the criticising, testing, approving work of reason; it must have a metaphysical and factual background; it must be able to present itself to the world as objectively true as well as devotionally valuable.

But, if some Christian theologians tend to weaken the edifice of Christian truth by the minor importance which they ascribe to reason, much more evidently is this tendency displayed in the doctrines of certain exponents of the new Psychology. In their eyes the work of reason seems to consist mainly in alleging false motives for acts which in reality proceed from instinct pure and simple, and in ascribing fallaciously an external reality to what are just feelings of the mind. Thus Mr. Tansley, who may be taken as a representative of the school, writes: "the power of conscious reasoning is a later development, playing but a minor part, even in the most highly developed human being, on the surface, so to speak, of the firmly built edifice of instincts, emotions, and desires, which form the main structure of the mental organism. In many cases the apparent importance of rational activity is seen to be illusory, forming as it were a mere cloak for the action of deep-seated instincts and desires." So, too, he alludes scornfully to writers who make "the tacit assumption that man is primarily a rational creature," and who ignore thereby "the fundamental fact that the human mind is built up of a bundle of instincts, which, it is true, are kept in check, and thereby often masked, by their interactions, but which are just as much alive and just as vigorous as they were in the days of Neolithic man."[1] Now, we are not in the least concerned to dispute

[1] *The New Psychology and its Relation to Life*, by A. G. Tansley, pp. 14 and 159

the power and vigour of our instinctive desires; in this respect we are quite content to range ourselves alongside of Neolithic man, or any other sort of man; but we maintain that the agency by which they are "kept in check, and thereby often masked" (!) is not their own interaction, but the power of the rational will. A dog may be held in passive equilibrium by the interaction of the instinct of hunger and the instinct of fear when he hesitates to dispute a bone with another dog, but such an explanation is quite inapplicable to developed human volition.

Present-day Psychology is prepared to recognise Christian experiences as psychic facts, but does not accept their witness to anything but themselves. Their claim to have reference to, and to be based upon, an external spiritual reality is repudiated. Any work of reason which posits such theories is declared to be illegitimate; reason has nothing to do but to co-ordinate instincts, either in the sphere of knowledge or in that of action; in other words, it is, in Hume's old dictum, "the slave of the passions," taking "passion" in its widest meaning. Instincts, in their combinations and interactions, are what make up the human mind. If religion, or religious experience, is content to be regarded as instinct, well and good; but if it transgresses this limitation, and undertakes constructive work in philosophy and theology, it is held to fall a prey to illusion and hallucination. Thus, *God* represents an idea that arises in the mind, expressing herd instincts and desires, but if we ascribe a real existence to Him, we are guilty of the fallacy of "projection," which "consists in attributing parts of the mental content to outside entities."[1] God is "a concentrated projection of all the qualities useful to the herd."[2] He may also be, in a more advanced stage, a projec-

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 133.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 137.

tion of the " ethical self " ; but here again the projection involves an illegitimate reference to an " outside entity."

Of course, such a line of thought would naturally rule out the recognition of anything outside the mind ; it would condemn as illusory the belief in an external world as well as the belief in an external deity ; and if condemnation is passed on the one and not on the other, this is due to the preferences or prejudices of the author, not to any rational exigences of the theory. Mr. Tansley cordially recognises the legitimacy of a desire for objective truth ; " a very important feature of the ego," he writes, " is the desire for objective truth and the power of recognising it when gained. Upon these are based the possibility of constructing the whole fabric of science, and they are essential servants in the building up of the ethical self. By objective truth is meant the kind of knowledge recognised by all normal minds as valid when all the relevant facts are appreciated."[1] But, if the constructive work of reason is accepted in the matter of science, why should it be necessarily illusive in the matter of theology ? In matter of fact, no interaction or co-ordination of instincts could produce either " objective truth " or the " ethical self " ; in approving of these latter, Mr. Tansley is drawing conclusions which cannot be made to follow from his premises. Instincts cannot possibly build up either a system of morals or the fabric of science. Both of these are rational constructions ; and if the work of reason is (contrary to his own principles) held to be rightly exercised in them, its work cannot be condemned as *ipso facto* void and illusory when it is occupied with theistic philosophy or a system of theology. The very existence of science and ethics shows that the sphere of reason is not as limited and subordinate

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 190

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SCHOOL
OF THEOLOGY LIBRARY

in scope, and as dubious and equivocal in character, as the new Psychology asserts ; and, when it investigates the validity of religious experience or gives reasons for believing in the existence of God, it ought to be able to count on an impartial hearing, instead of being pulled up by Psychology and told to mind its proper business, which is the glorification of instincts and instinctive impulses.

This ecstatic devotion to instinct is just an illustration of the exaggerated emphasis laid upon facts which have suddenly won notice and recognition, and which have not yet found their place in the big context of human knowledge. There is no doubt that the instincts are natural and ready-to-hand channels for that ebullient energy which is what we mean by life ; and no doubt that the energy which flows through those channels is very powerful and persistent. But the matter does not rest there ; we must go further back and recognise that the vital energy itself, and not the instincts, are the ultimate fact to be explained. The same vital force which works through the instincts can assert itself and express itself along other lines ; and the rational will can, by its exercise of attention and inhibition, determine the direction of its course. Science, religion, politics, art, have each their own attraction for rational beings, and can, of themselves and for themselves, be channels for the flow of energy, without being regarded as roundabout and dubious sublimations of the sex-instinct.

Modern Psychology is suffering from an obsession with instinct, but we may hope and believe that it will outgrow this, and come to take larger and truer views of the nature of truth. Psychology has a very important and interesting work to do in explaining the mechanism which the mind employs in forming ideas ; in expounding the part taken in this work by feeling, perception, memory and attention ; in dealing

with the circumstances in which experiences are forgotten, and the methods by which they can be recalled, and similar investigations. In other words, it is concerned with the way in which the mind actually works in the formation of ideas and convictions, whether in the sphere of religion or art or science or philosophy. But the question of the validity and truth of the ideas themselves lies beyond its province. Speaking of religion, Dr. Oman says, " the reality or unreality of its objects can no more be determined purely psychologically in religion than, say, in commerce. For psychology an object is real when it is regarded as existing outside of the mind ; and the determination of whether it is actually real or not is a matter of evidence and not of psychology."[1] Psychology can explain how we form an idea of God ; but whether there is a God or not, and whether our ideas on the subject are valid or not, is a question to be dealt with by the united witness of theology in its various departments, and of philosophy and history.

It is, then, very important for us at the present time to emphasise the definite work of reason in providing a foundation on which spiritual ideas and experiences can rest securely. And I cannot help feeling that in this, and in other matters, we Christians are rather too anxious to be up to date and " in touch with modern thought " ; we insist on looking at everything from a circumscribed psychological point of view, and tend to bow down to the idol of instinct, oblivious of the fact that it stands on feet of miry clay, which cannot support the weight which is laid upon them.

In Modernism, again, we see a similar exaggeration of the subjective side of religion. Experience is presented to us there as an independent entity, complete in itself, self-contained and self-explanatory, growing by its own laws, and largely indifferent to

[1] *Science, Religion and Reality*, p. 274.

the truth or falsity of historical facts. Modernism sprang from a revolt against the intellectualism of a complicated dogmatic system in the Roman Church, and against the unlimited authority claimed for an external revelation of divine truth, and in opposition to that one-sided abstraction set up another equally one-sided, which began as a doctrine of divine immanence, and gradually evolved into a system of emotional and progressive moralism, in which God often occupies what is little more than a nominal and ceremonial position.

Now, of course, it would be quite unfair to charge our Anglican champions of experience with the vagaries and exaggerations of the new Psychology and of the Modernism which I have just mentioned; but at the same time their view of spiritual experience as prior to, and independent of, intellectual faith, shows a tendency which may easily become a serious perversion of the character and complexion of Catholic theology.

III

INTERACTION OF EXPERIENCE AND BELIEF

SO far, we have been concerned with the validity of Christian experience in general. We have recognised the important work done in this connection by reason; we have seen how, as belief in certain facts, it prompts and directs religious experience; how, as reflection upon the resulting experience, it builds up creeds and doctrines; and, lastly, how it seeks to establish the validity of the beliefs as good history, and of the creeds as good philosophy. Only when this comprehensive work has been done can Christian experience claim to have made good its objective truth, as proceeding from valid beliefs and supported by a sound metaphysic.

And now there are two further considerations to be taken into account in dealing with the close interrelationship of belief and experience. In the first place, if the experience of a Christian is to rest securely on his belief in Christ, and to have evidential value for other people, we must satisfy ourselves not only that the belief itself is true, but also that the experience is in substantial conformity with the belief. We must be able to distinguish between forms of experience which flow spontaneously and consistently from His character and teaching, and others which distort or falsify it through moral flaws or wrong preconceptions in those who have the experience. It is obviously only the former sort which can claim

the authority of Christ for its deliverance. And I think this is a point which deserves more attention than it has received. There is undoubtedly a *prima facie* ground for the statement that the truth of the faith guarantees the authenticity of the experience which flows from it; but we have to be sure that the experience does flow pure and undefiled from the teaching and character of Christ; and it is sometimes rather difficult to be sure of this.

It is probably inevitable that each individual Christian should be specially attracted by some one of the qualities or aspects of Christ, and there is a serious temptation to isolate this special facet from the others in which it has its context, and so take up a one-sided and somewhat distorted attitude to Him, an attitude which will necessarily warp the experience which results. Thus, one man's experience may consist mainly in a sense of his own profound sinfulness in contrast with the unapproachable holiness of Christ, an experience which forgets the other aspect of His redemptive love. Another may experience an ecstatic happiness in view of His accomplished work of redemption, whilst thinking lightly of the duty of service which should be his response to that work of Christ. Another will experience devotion to Him as a prophet and preacher of righteousness, whilst ignoring His supernatural origin and claims. All such experiences are right in themselves, and reflect some aspect of Christ's doctrine; but unfortunately they too often claim to be, in each case, the one and only true aspect of that doctrine; they are not content to envisage a positive element of truth, but go on, as in the typical instances I have given, to repudiate elements experienced by other people, losing thereby their grasp of the truth as a whole, and also the virtue of Christian charity. The fact that, in a sense, we can only affirm by denying, and can only emphasise one

thing by contrasting it with another, is a deplorable defect which marks all human thought and knowledge. We can only define a thing by marking it off from other things; and we tend to sharpen its distinctive outlines as much as possible in order to make it stand out as clearly as possible from those other things. This arises ultimately, as Bergson teaches us, from the necessity which is laid upon us to think in terms of space. However immaterial and spiritual the objects of our thoughts may be, we have to think of them as "things" standing in contrast to other things alongside of them. To a divine intelligence, not spacially conditioned, truths would be seen to permeate, interpenetrate, and melt into each other, instead of repelling and contradicting each other as they do with us. Some poets and mystics are able to free themselves to some extent from this disability,[1] but most people are seriously affected by it; in the sphere of religion it has a narrowing influence on their beliefs and practice. And there is no more convincing evidence of our Lord's supra-human nature than the perfect harmony, balance, coherence in Him of qualities which in us men tend inevitably to repel and antagonise each other. We see the utter unearthliness which marked His character and impressed all beholders, combined with the simplicity and homeliness with which He mixed with all sorts and conditions of men. The human nature which He has assumed is so

[1] Wordsworth, a great prophet of the interconnectedness of things, deplores our inevitable tendency to cut up and divide them: "Our meddling intellect mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things; We murder to dissect." So, too, Lord Dunsany, in *The Blessing of Pan* (p. 264) gives us a haunting description of a fugitive, elusive sense of kinship and unity pervading all things "Tears welled up in them all, salt and hot, but they saw through the gold of them that they and the distant stars, and the little lives near in the wood, and the Earth and its rocks and its flowers were not separate as they had thought; and how this was they all knew well while that music played, but they have all forgotten it now."

perfect and flawless and complete that He can exhibit, equally and naturally, qualities which fall apart in all others. Different features of His life make an impression, and receive an embodiment, in the spiritual experience of His followers: in the asceticism of St. James; in the pastoral work of St. Peter; in the mystical devotion of St. John and St. Paul; in the homely simplicity of St. Andrew and St. Philip; in the knowledge of Aquinas; in the loving insight of St. Francis; but each of these is a quite distinct type; an attempt to fuse them together in a single human character would rightly be condemned as something unnatural and unreal. In Christ alone such a combination exists as an astounding bit of reality. As we read the record, there is no feeling that incompatibles are being illegitimately combined; the human nature which He has taken into Himself is so perfect and comprehensive that He can exhibit, quite naturally and impartially, qualities which fall apart in the case of others.

Our Christian experience, then, may be really derived from Christ, may really reflect some quality in His character and teaching, and yet will be always a very fragmentary, one-sided expression of His mind. This must necessarily be so for the reason we have given, and also because of the differences in our temperaments and dispositions. The remedy would seem to be two-fold. First, we must study the Gospel picture of Christ humbly and carefully, in order that the dominant quality of our experience may be purified and corrected by the example of that quality as found in Him; so that our own poor idea of sin, of holiness, of forgiveness, of service, may at any rate be in conformity with His teaching. And, secondly, this same study of the Gospel will show us the manifold variety which we have seen to be revealed in Christ, and will teach us that the experience of other people,

if it cannot be combined with our own, has a right to its place alongside of ours, and a right to make its own appeal to the authority of His character.

Christian experience, then, is prompted by faith in Christ, and that faith is the test to which it must be submitted and by which it must be judged. If the experience is to be accepted confidently as valid, it must continually be recalled to His actual teaching, and confronted with His picture; and, again, our partial, one-sided attitude must be expanded to recognise the "catholic wholeness" and variety which is His. And, because our narrow and prejudiced views can never be enlarged to the fullness of the measure of the stature of Christ, we must further recognise that the experience which alone can really be adequate and true is not the experience of an individual, however good, but the united, corporate experience of the whole body of His followers, especially of the Saints, who were nearest to Him in love and devotion, and were therefore best able to reflect the truth as revealed in Him.

We hold, then, that the corporate experience of Christendom, and especially of the Saints who are its spokesmen, is in conformity with the teaching of Christ; and as we have previously seen reason to accept that teaching as valid and infallible, we may reasonably claim that a corporate experience which stands that test, and establishes its sincerity and comprehensiveness, is itself authentic and evidential —that is, that it is really a revelation of the mind of Christ, and therefore an expression of truth proceeding from a spiritual Reality at the centre of the universe. Further and more particular tests, applicable to the more advanced forms of experience will be considered later. In the meantime it is enough to suggest that Christian experience in its purest and completest form is the co-ordinated experience of the Saints, illustrated

and verified by constant reference to the life and teaching of their Master. It should be an important part of the Church's work to gather up, harmonise and edit this experience in a Corpus of Comparative Hagiology; so that individual Christians of different sorts and conditions might each find there an ideal and inspiration for himself, and find also a bond of union with his fellow-Christians. The figure of Christ, there portrayed, will comprehend the experience of them all, remove their antagonisms, and weld them together so as to fashion, between them, a true reflection of Him in whom dwells all the fullness of grace and truth. Perhaps the re-union of Christendom may be most effectually furthered by the growth of this inward spiritual experience, and the fellowship which it establishes between all who love and follow Christ.

The validity of Christian experience depends, then, on the fulfilment of two conditions: first the acceptance of Christ's teaching, from which it flows, as true and authoritative; and, secondly, the agreement of the experience (ultimately, the corporate experience of Christendom) with the teaching given in His words and character.

And now, in the second place, there is another fact to be considered. When experience is thus established and approved, it will be able in its turn to exercise an important reflex influence on faith, and thereby perform a useful service for religion. It does this in three ways. In the first place, it verifies the faith by showing that the faith is a vital power, able to regulate men's lives, and stimulate their emotions, and enlighten them in practical difficulties and perplexities. Faith, in proportion as it expresses itself in experience, becomes more sure of itself, more practical and real; it verifies itself by proving itself a safe guide to conduct. The experience which flows

from belief substantiates and establishes and commends the belief which originally gave rise to it.

Secondly, experience has a quickening, transfiguring effect on belief. As I have written elsewhere, " from the crucible of spiritual experience the early revelation of fact and doctrine emerges in the form of personal convictions, which are profoundly and intimately true, not only in the sense of expressing what is revealed, but also as an epitome of what has been lived through and has been verified in experience. And these convictions will be expressed in language which still glows and burns in the heat of the spirit ; in it the man sums up that which Christ, who originated the experience, has come to be to him as the result of the experience. And this means an immense deepening and advance in our knowledge of God. The vital convictions which come out of the furnace of experience are substantially the same as the original credal facts, only spiritualised, intensified and quickened ; no longer a theme for argument, but truths of which the man has the witness in himself."[1]

And, thirdly, religious experience enables us to discriminate between different articles of faith, and to emphasise those which have proved most powerful and beneficial in their influence on Christian life. Experience exercises a discriminating as well as a quickening influence on belief.

This discrimination has taken place from the earliest times. The Christian consciousness ascribed from the beginning an outstanding importance to certain beliefs on the ground of their bearing upon Christian character and conduct. Such discrimination was obviously at work when the creeds were drawn up. Catechumens were instructed, before admission into the Church, in those truths about God which were proving to be of the greatest help for the Christian life

[1] *Faith and Experience*, p. 112.

upon which they were entering. And St. Paul's theology is focused and concentrated upon the two great truths of the death and resurrection of Christ, as truths of supreme importance for the edification and guidance of himself and his converts in the practice of their religion.

And the same discrimination is working, more or less vigorously, in the life of all those whose religious experience is strong and vital.

Before the coming of practical experience the articles of belief appear as a trim and well-arranged garden, divided in an orderly fashion into distinct plots, each representing a doctrine of the Creed; but afterwards the barriers are broken down; some plots look comparatively barren, whilst others overflow with luxuriant growth, and occasionally one great doctrine dominates the whole space. This does not mean, of course, that the other articles of belief are less true because they have, at any rate at times, a less practical bearing upon life; they all have their place in the context and framework of the faith; and if they lost their position there, the balance and proportion of the faith would suffer, and even those articles which appear to be of higher importance would themselves run a serious risk of being distorted and misunderstood. For instance, if the statement "He descended into hell" were eliminated as unimportant, the full reality of Christ's death on the cross, consisting in an actual severance of soul and body, might be explained away; and, again, if the words "the third day" were eliminated from the statement that "He rose again from the dead," the resurrection might cease to be regarded as a definite historical event, and would thereby lose its peculiar and crowning significance in the redemptive work of Christ. So, while it is perfectly right to emphasise the special importance of certain articles of belief, in view of their special bearing on life and

experience, this does not mean that they owe their truth to the experience, or that other articles are less true because they seem to have less direct practical results. It will often happen that the relative importance of different beliefs will vary from time to time according to the needs or temperaments of individuals or to the circumstances under which they live. Apart from the Christological beliefs mentioned above, it will happen that some people will find peculiar value in the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God; others, in the distinct divine personality of the Holy Spirit; others, in the catholicity of the Church as the great ideal communion and fellowship of Christians throughout the world; others, in the resurrection of the body, and the emphasis thereby laid on the continuity of a complete human personality after death. For different people, then, different articles of belief will be found to yield specially valuable experience during their earthly life; but the faith itself is a closely knit body of eternal truth in which all the elements strengthen and supplement each other.

Our conclusion, then, is that belief prompts and objectifies experience, and that experience vitalises belief. Without experience, belief would be sterile dogma; without belief, experience would be a body of private wishes and ego-centric ideas.

Before leaving this part of our subject, a few words must be said about two objections which are sometimes made. The first is, that religious experience is due to auto-suggestion; that is, that ideas, wishes, and expectations, consciously or unconsciously working in the mind, cause the experience and dictate the form which it shall take. Probably there was a good deal of truth in this contention with regard to a certain type of conversion which used to be rather common in the past, when young people were confidently informed that at a particular age conversion ought to

take place, and were instructed as to the precise form in which the experience should be expected to occur. Very often orders thus given were promptly executed, and the experience was forthcoming according to instructions received. But such occurrences were due to special and peculiar conditions, and only cover a small and artificially prepared part of the ground; to argue from them that religious experience in general is due to auto-suggestion would be quite illegitimate. In very many cases the religious experience, which comes in answer to prayer and in other ways, does not correspond to the ideas or wishes which were in people's minds and were expressed in their prayers, or were suggested to them by others. This is well put by Mr. Spens, who, in combating this explanation of spiritual experience, lays stress on the "unexpectedness of grace," and on "the fact that, while the experience is in accordance with underlying belief, it is very often not in accordance with the particular expectations which were in the mind of the individual concerned. It is a phenomenon of the spiritual life, a phenomenon to which many writers have drawn attention, and which few students of that life would hesitate to affirm, that prayer for grace is very commonly not answered in accordance with the expectation of the answer. The grace supplied, or the fruit of the grace sought, is found to be different to that expected, although as effective or more effective."[1] Similarly, we may observe that it is difficult to believe the Apostles' experience of the risen Christ to have been due to auto-suggestion, in view of the fact that the resurrection was obviously unexpected by them, and only came to be accepted as true through the convincing strength of external evidence.

Spiritual experience certainly implies a real belief in God, but very often does not follow or express pre-

[1] Op. cit., p. 35.

conceived ideas in the mind of the recipient; and very often, as in cases of vocation, cuts right across such preconceived wishes and ideas. Faith in Christ prompts the experience, but sometimes prompts it in unexpected, strange, and even unwelcome forms, which are clearly not explicable as due to auto-suggestion.

The second objection is to the effect that other religions besides Christianity have their strong experiences, and we have, at any rate, no right to give our experiences a higher value or validity than theirs. Here the answer is obvious, and follows from what has been said above. We are not dealing with rival experiences, each considered as a subjective, uncriticised mental phenomenon, depending on nothing, and giving expression to nothing, beyond its own emotional and imaginative qualities—in which case they might fairly be regarded as on the same equally irrational level. Rather, the various experiences of different religions rest upon the intellectual acceptance of certain beliefs, and it is these intellectual principles which have to be compared if the derivative experiences are to have their degrees of validity properly assessed. If we believe the Christian creed to be truer than those of Mahommedans and Hindus, we shall naturally and rightly ascribe a different value to the experiences which are prompted by these different beliefs. We have here just another illustration of our contention that belief is the test by which experiences are to be compared and judged.

PART II
PHASES OF SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

INTRODUCTION

SO far we have been considering spiritual experience as a whole, whether it consists in emotions of love and aspirations after God; or a sense of communion with Him, or of sin that thwarts that communion; or an awareness of His presence and devotion to His service; or intuition into His will, and into definite works to be done in accordance with it. We have seen (1) that this varied experience is prompted and inspired by belief in God. The belief may at first be crude and childish, as we shall recognise in what follows, and such qualities will be reflected in the experience; but, whatever the character of the experience may be, it bears throughout an "objective reference"; it presents itself not as a mere feeling of our own, but as expressing some degree of relationship to Him. (2) If belief is always the fount from which experience proceeds, the validity of the experience will depend on the truth and trustworthiness of the belief; and I have tried very briefly to indicate grounds for accepting as true the faith in Christ as presented in the Gospels and promulgated by the Church. (3) If, and when, the faith is thus established and the experience authenticated, light is thrown back upon the initial stage of belief which gave rise to the early form of experience. The "objective reference" mentioned above, or the aspiration of the soul after a God existing

above and beyond itself, is recognised as due to an essential affinity between a soul made in God's image and the God who made it—an affinity which the Holy Spirit, as the Finger of God, can touch into the reality of communion with Him. Thus the earliest phase of belief, which initiated religious experience, is itself illuminated and explained by the later and maturer belief in the nature of God and the human soul.

(4) We have seen also that spiritual experience must be kept always in close touch with the teaching and character of Christ revealed in the Gospels; that any single individual's experience is bound to be not only an imperfect but also a one-sided and partial representation of the wholeness that is in Him; and that therefore the only ultimately satisfactory and evidential experience is the corporate experience of the great company of the Christian Saints.

(5) Lastly, the experience which flows from belief in Christ has a reflex action upon that belief, verifying its practical value, and discriminating between its various elements according to the special circumstances of various ages and individuals.

And now, after this treatment of Christian experience as a whole, some attempt must be made to distinguish different types of it, and to indicate certain lines of advance from one type to another. But it is well to state at the outset that these types are not to be regarded as following one another in a fixed, irreversible order; people can, and often do, pass backwards and forwards from one to another—a fact which is especially noticeable in regard to the later developments of spiritual experience. For this reason these

various types are here treated as different phases rather than as successive stages of experience, though broad lines of advance and development are also indicated.

They may be compared profitably, not to successive stations on a railway line, one of which must be passed through and left behind before the next is reached, but rather to the lines of a temperature chart, which rise and fall, advance and recede from day to day, whilst at the same time, if things go well, they point to a gradual progress towards the attainment of natural and normal conditions. Moreover, just as earlier phases of bodily health reappear in the later physical development, so in spiritual experience the past is taken up into the future, to exist there as a permanent and integral part of the complex whole.

In portraying these various phases of religious experience, I propose to arrange them under three main heads, each of which will again be sub-divided into three. I do this, not from a desire to follow the course of Hegelian dialectic, but simply because it seems practically impossible to touch any subject of study without finding it break up inevitably into a series of triads. The first main type of spiritual experience, then, will be ASPIRATION, with its sub-heads of Emotion, Imagination, and Other-worldliness; then DISCIPLINE, which comprises Conversion, Renunciation, and Penitence; and, thirdly, FELLOWSHIP, subdivided into Citizenship, Communion, and Union.

(*a*) *ASPIRATION*

IV

EMOTION

FIRST, then, we may consider the phase of Emotional experience, which has its typical expression in the religion of young children. Their religious experience is quite simple and natural. They have not learnt to discriminate between different sorts of reality and to relegate religion to a dim, shadowy world of which there is very little to be said. It seems to be as natural for them to see an angel or our Lady as to see a man in the street; and there is the same comprehensiveness in their prayers; a little child of my acquaintance used to pray regularly for the Knave of Hearts, as for an evil-doer whose conversion she desired. There is in such children a real sense of the nearness of God, and a feeling of being at home with Him, which older people have to struggle painfully after. It has become the fashion to-day to decry Wordsworth's doctrine that "Heaven lies about us in our infancy," and that "trailing clouds of glory do we come from God who is our Home." We are assured, on the contrary, that the infant is an entirely earthy little animal, and that "the growing boy" is in much the same position; that religion is just a hypothesis raised and discussed, and probably rejected, by adult men moving "in the light of common day," which is the only genuine light that we have. But this theory is preposterously far from the truth, and would not be accepted by anyone who has had a real sympathetic acquaintance

with child-life and its spontaneous reaction to religious impressions. Whatever amplifications and corrections may be made by reason as they grow up, the experience itself bears the hall-mark stamp of clearness, simplicity and love.

But there is no doubt that this experience is moulded, in the form of expression which it takes, by the influence of its environment, religious, social and domestic. The particular belief which it embodies is imported ready-made from outside, in the credal convictions of Church, home and companions. The prayers, emotions and visions, which make up a large part of the religion of a child, thus rest on a basis of belief, which he assimilates unconsciously, but cannot at the time understand or criticise or explain. His religion is, thus, very naturally a matter of emotion.

And in this respect many people remain children to the end of their lives. Their emotions are aroused sometimes perhaps by exciting appeals at revivalist meetings, or again by Catholic worship with the attraction of music and ceremonial. The ritual of the cult, in either case, produces emotion, and, as Professor Whitehead writes, is " valued for the sake of the emotion," not because the emotion bears witness to great spiritual truth. And the danger is that, in this phase, emotion never gets beyond itself; its strength is the strength of crude, uncriticised feeling, which feeds upon itself; it often becomes, in consequence, violent in its manifestations, as well as being, like all emotion, a transitory and unstable state of mind. When religious experience consists of emotion, and emotion has nothing solid to rest on, it tends to work itself up into ever keener degrees of excitement. If religion consists in nothing but emotion, the emotion must at any rate be as strong as possible; the violence of the emotion will be a mark of the reality of the religion. The passionate, orgiastic cult

of Dionysus is the classical example of the religion of emotion growing consistently to its extremest development.

For Christians, emotion ought not to be a permanent type of religious experience. It is to be regarded rather as an immature, childish stage, which grows into something different, under the influence which intelligent beliefs exert. Under the developing control of belief, feeling ceases to have a free hand and an unlimited scope; it is now directed more and more to the person and example of Christ, with the ethical appeal inseparably involved in that. Rational belief is gradually growing; the statements of the Catechism, learnt by heart as a lesson of childhood are being re-learnt as truths with a bearing on life, and the primitive emotion is being transmuted into definitely spiritual experience.

But although, under the influence of reason, this phase of religious emotion forfeits its simple self-sufficient character of pure feeling, and becomes an appendage of certain beliefs which arouse and rule it, it can never be superseded, but survives throughout as the rough material of religion. Reason may refine and spiritualise it, may direct or sometimes misdirect it, in subsequent stages of experience; but in its manifold forms of love, joy, fear, humility and wonder, it represents an affectionate attitude of the soul to God which belongs to the inner essence of religion. Often, indeed, a growth in sanctity means a recovery of this simplicity of feeling and a deliverance from intellectualist sophistications. No doubt, the emotions which express a Saint's religion have been trained and disciplined by a long and arduous process of prayer and thought and struggle, but they are still emotion, and belong to that childlike nature which is a passport to the kingdom of heaven.

V

IMAGINATION AND REFLECTION

NEXT comes what we may call the phase of Imagination and Reflection. This type of religious experience is not merely emotional; it becomes rather what may be described as imaginative in character; that is, it becomes a pondering of the Gospel story, and an imaginative reconstruction of scenes and events contained in it. We kneel before a crucifix, picture to ourselves the climax of the Passion, and apply it to our lives; the result being that definite feelings of humiliation and love are strongly aroused. The experience begins in a visualising act of the imagination, and ends in the stirring of congruous emotions. The difference between this and the earlier phase described above is that here, whilst emotion still holds a prominent and important place, it is no longer left mainly to itself, as in the other type, but has now an intelligently pictured historical and ethical background. The experience ends in emotion, but the emotions are coming to be definitely associated with reason, and to be inspired by an intelligent faith in God. And the term "imagination" seems to describe its nature fairly well; not, of course, in the sense that it is untrue, but in the sense that it is mainly pictorial, drawing its conclusions and reflections from the scenes which it envisages.

And two characteristics seem to be implied in this type of experience. In the first place, it involves an active operation of the mind, which is busily occupied

in a detailed and manifold programme of work. For instance, in discursive meditation, which is a well-known and widely practised devotional exercise, the imagination is very busy picturing scenes and reconstructing events and dialogues from sacred history, and in eliciting the reflections which are seen to follow from and be appropriate to them. And to many people this is not only an active but a difficult and exacting task; it is compared by St. Teresa to the laborious operation of drawing water in buckets from a well, the water being God's grace which is thus obtained through great mental exertions and in somewhat scanty measure. The difficulty involved in such a work arises from the fact that the imagination is a flighty, Puck-like faculty, which passes lightly from point to point, and dislikes being directed steadily to certain selected topics; it is busy with its own operations, and is rather like a school-boy who draws pictures in his copy-book, and only has a divided attention to give to his master's words. The result is that wandering thoughts and manifold distractions are found to be serious obstacles by those who are engaged in the devotions belonging to this phase of experience. Certainly, those who face and overcome such difficulties gain great profit from such meditation; the Gospel narrative, with its vivid pictures of the life of Christ, becomes very real to them, and brings Him into intimate touch with their present-day life. But, at the same time, it is true that the absorption of the mind in its own work, and its use of a mental faculty which does not seem capable of sustained attention, interfere greatly with that attitude of quiet waiting upon God which is a mark of deeper forms of spiritual experience.

And the second mark which characterises this type of experience is closely connected with the one which has just been mentioned. Just because the mind is

so intently occupied in its own work, it becomes unduly self-centred; and this in two ways. In the first place, the interest which the imagination takes in its operations, and its delight in any success achieved, together with the lack of will-power which has been alluded to, tempt it to vainglory and self-assertion. And its liability to such aberrations is the reason why the prayer of meditation, with which this phase of experience is so closely connected, is to be regarded as on a lower level than certain other forms of prayer.

This matter of the order of merit in which different sorts of prayer are ranked is one which ought to be clearly grasped, as there is a good deal of misunderstanding with regard to it. When one type of prayer is rightly held to be superior to another, this is not in the least because it is a more high-brow achievement, or of a more exalted and abnormal nature, but simply because it is a better expression of Christian character, and in particular of the two supreme Christian virtues of humility and charity. There is not much appearance of humility when we take great pride in the beautiful thoughts which we have conjured up in the course of our prayer, or in the success of our imagination in picturing scenes and of our intellect in constructing arguments. As St. Teresa writes, " the understanding bestirs itself to make its thanksgiving in phrases well arranged; but the will, in peace, not daring to lift up its eyes with the publican, makes perhaps a better act of thanksgiving than the understanding with all the tropes of its rhetoric."[1]

And, secondly, this self-centredness of the imagination extends beyond a childish pride in its handiwork, and tends to infect the inner conception of religion and the object which is sought in it. What we are apt to aim at here is comfort and satisfaction for ourselves as the result, or even as the essence, of our

[1] *Life*, Chapter xv, p. 14.

meditation; we are apt to be what St. Catherine of Siena calls "mercenary" in our devotions. Of course religion does satisfy, and is meant to satisfy our feelings and our needs, but it does this most effectually and legitimately in proportion as we think less about these satisfactions, and more about the worship and service rendered by ourselves to God. As long as we are wrapped up in ourselves and our own emotional, æsthetic or spiritual requirements, our religion has not come to maturity.

The pictorial type of experience, then, based mainly on imagination and reflection, has a very real virtue in envisaging facts and events of sacred history and eliciting conclusions from them, but is defective in the sense that, in this phase, we rely too much on our own mental work, and are too exclusively interested in our small private selves.

VI

OTHER-WORLDLINESS

WE pass now to another type of spiritual experience, which we may call that of Other-worldliness.

Imagination and reflection, focused on the Gospel story, make the mind familiar with the reality of a supernatural order of things, and the love and devotion inspired by this supernatural sphere, as expressed and revealed by Christ, lead to a critical and unfavourable estimate of this present world and the things that belong to it. There grows, in various degrees, a sense of the unsatisfactoriness of the natural order, of the futility of human life lived on earth, even when strengthened and comforted by the consolations which religion brings; in a word, there rises in the mind a restless and disturbing sense of loneliness and homelessness; a feeling which makes people unable to find rest for their souls in the ordinary interests and occupations of life; a feeling of dissatisfaction and disappointment with the world, and a persistent groping after something beyond; a sense of being strangers and pilgrims upon earth, and of aloofness from earthly things; an other-worldliness which need not connote inefficiency or carelessness in practical affairs, but just indicates that these affairs are not an absorbing interest to such a soul as they are to other people, but, rather distractions or by-works for one who feels that his real home and interests and

business are elsewhere, in " a land which is very far off," but from which come gleams and glimpses to thrill him and guide him and beckon him upwards and onwards towards it.

The degree in which this experience is felt will vary indefinitely in different people; those who have received some spiritual " enlightenment," who have " tasted of the heavenly gift, and the powers of the world to come " (Heb. vi, 4–5), will be keenly susceptible to it. They need not be cynics or pessimists, but they feel deeply that, in comparison with the celestial ideal in their souls, there is something soiled and shabby in the highest forms of beauty and goodliness which the world can offer. They feel with the Platonists that such a measure of " grace " as is manifested in this world comes down from above and belongs to a different sphere, and that their own home is *there;* they agree with the Christian writer that " here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come," a " city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God " (Heb. xiii, 14; xi, 10); they sing with St. Bernard:

For thee, O dear, dear country,
Mine eyes their vigils keep;
For very love beholding
Thy happy name, they weep.

Thou hast no shore, fair ocean,
Thou hast no time, bright day,
Dear fountain of refreshment
To pilgrims far away.

The robust Philistine and the hard-shelled materialist may jeer at such sentiments as mawkish and unreal, but even they are not always and entirely immune. In some degree this " Hound of Heaven " dogs the feet of all men, even of those who would be thought,

and would think themselves, most impervious to any vocation to other-worldliness. The unrest of the present age, the despair so many men feel of getting anything on earth with which they can be satisfied, the ever-increasing pace at which life is lived in a passionate pursuit of something that ever eludes them, are marks of this. Pirandello, who has an open eye for the oddities and abnormalities of human life, gives vivid expression to this fact. There is in man, he tells us, a " beyond " (*un oltre*), a " something in excess " (*un di piu*), a something " unnecessary " (*superfluo*), or unwanted for earthly life, but which at the same time haunts and disturbs him, and refuses to allow him to be satisfied with earthly things. " In fact," he says, " the world would seem to be made for the animals rather than for men. Nature endows the animals with just that which suffices for them, and which is necessary to enable them to live in the state for which they were severally destined ; whereas men have in themselves a something unnecessary, which is always tormenting them, not allowing them ever to be satisfied with any state of life, and leaving them always in doubt about their destiny." " I mean," he explains further, " that on earth man is in an evil plight, because there is in him something more than suffices for earthly well-being, that is, for peace and contentment. And the truth that this which man possesses, and which makes him man and not brute, is a something in excess, as far as the earth is concerned, is shown by the fact that it—this ' excess something '—cannot rest in anything, nor be satisfied with anything here below ; so that it seeks and demands elsewhere, beyond the life on earth, a recompense for its misery."[1]

[1] *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio, operatore,* by Luigi Pirandello, pp. 11 and 13.

This experience of other-worldliness can be most reasonably explained by the doctrine that there is in man a spark of the divine, which can never rest content with worldly or created things. This instinctive impulse towards God, and sense of affinity with Him, is an undying and unchanging source from which religion springs, and the sure guarantee of its continuance. The Christian expresses and explains it, and presents it as a sign-post pointing to Heaven.

The practical effect of this experience may take different forms. It may, undoubtedly, result in an attitude of entire aloofness from earthly ties and interests; the man may be so completely absorbed in his contemplation of the other world as to neglect the duties incumbent upon him in this one; his religion may not only be (what it ought to be) the dominant interest in his life, but may also be encased in a water-tight compartment, from which earthly affections and obligations are excluded. There is plenty of evidence of this, even sometimes in the lives of people whose occupation with the other world does not seem particularly profound, but who make that occupation, such as it is, an excuse for exemption from human sympathies.

But, on the other hand, other-worldliness may be, and should be, and often is, an inspiration to make the world better and worthier as an "example and shadow of heavenly things" (Heb. viii, 5). The best things on earth—human affections, the beauty of the world, the truth of things—are seen, indeed, by these people to be poor and unsatisfying in themselves, but they recognise them as shadowing forth the "pattern in the mount," and are thereby inspired to remove, as far as may be, the flaws which obscure that likeness, and to make the celestial endowment more explicit, in themselves and others.

On the whole, then, Other-worldliness, at this

stage, will be best regarded as a wistful aspiration, intermittently expressed in action; as the vision of a far-off ideal which only becomes a present every-day reality in the light of subsequent experience of Citizenship in God's Kingdom.

(*b*) *DISCIPLINE*

VII

CONVERSION AND SPECULATION

THE last three types of spiritual experience with which we have been occupied represent comparatively immature and undeveloped phases, being mainly concerned with aspiration experienced in feeling. That with which we have now to deal agrees with them in being largely emotional in character, but its special peculiarity is that here the experience marks a process of transition from one attitude of mind or condition of life to another. It has many forms, but they can all be comprised and expressed under the general term Conversion. Conversion means turning; it marks a turning-point either from one type of religion to another, or a turning-point to religion from a previous state of indifference or sin. In common usage the word is taken to signify the latter process, especially in its most sudden and strongly emotional manifestations. And this has been due to two facts. First, cataclysmic revolutions of that sort are the more significant and interesting psychologically; in the sphere of psychology they hold a place analogous to that which detective stories and popular criminology hold in the fiction of to-day. And, secondly, the specimens and types of conversion dealt with in books on the Psychology of Religion have almost all been taken from strongly Protestant sources, and are of markedly "revivalistic" origin. Thus Wesley,[1] in speaking of deliverances from sin,

[1] Quoted by James in *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 227.

states, on the testimony of those who had experienced them, that in every case "the change was wrought in a moment. Had half of these, or one third, or one in twenty declared it was gradually wrought in them, I should have believed this with regard to them, and thought that some were gradually sanctified and some instantaneously. But as I have not found, in so long a space of time, a single person speaking thus, I cannot but believe that sanctification is commonly, if not always, an instantaneous work."

Such cases are the most easy to classify and analyse; and so it has come to pass that, in the hands of psychologists, the whole subject of conversion, often indeed the whole subject of religious experience, has been apt to be regarded as consisting in sudden upheavals, usually of a violent and vociferous character.

But, if we take a truer and more comprehensive view of conversion, we can distinguish, as suggested above, various ways in which the "turning" takes place. First, a changed attitude to religion, and thus a real phase of conversion, accompanies and is occasioned by the process of adolescent growth, in which new habits and modes of thought are developed on life as a whole. A feeling of restlessness, of dissatisfaction with a previous restricted outlook on things and a narrow arena of action, a reaching out to a sphere of wider interests and opportunities, a feeling of depression, of unworthiness and shyness, in view of the great adventure ahead, which resembles a pushing off from port into a great uncharted ocean of life—all this curious medley of adolescent experience is embodied and mirrored naturally in a form of religious conversion. No great crisis or sensational upheaval need take place; often there is just a process of finding a fresh meaning in phrases, passages of Scripture, or instructions, which have been passively assimilated in the past with little appreciation of their meaning,

and which now stand out as real revelations of truth or calls to action, as channels through which the ebullient vital energy can flow and find satisfaction. Here, then, we have a very real, but quiet, conversion from a phase of conventional religion to one of vital religion, a growth in which old beliefs are expanded and invested with new power and significance.

Very often, however, this development, normal and natural in itself, is stimulated and hastened by the instinct of imitation, and by social pressure exerted in home surroundings. A strong suggestion is then conveyed that such a conversion ought to be experienced; and often, with the best intentions in the world, these suggestions are over-done, and the conversion becomes artificial and forced and ephemeral, and even gives rise to a subsequent reaction from religion altogether. In such cases the feelings are felt from a feeling that they ought to be felt, not as the outcome of a healthy process of mental and spiritual growth.

A second type of conversion consists in a decisive turning to God from sin or indifference. Its early stage is a feeling of misery, weakness and despair, and it culminates, by a sudden reaction, in an experience of peace, reconciliation, and overwhelming happiness. The happiness consists in a sense of the presence and love of God, of an atonement affected by Christ, of the light of the Spirit in the heart. Certain people will be predisposed for such an experience through possessing a temperament of nervous instability and strong suggestibility, and through the working of repressed ideas in the "unconscious" tract of the mind. The latter is described by James as "the subconscious incubation and maturing of motives deposited by the experiences of life. When ripe, the results hatch out, or burst into flower";[1] and this

[1] Op cit., p. 230.

description is confirmed, in slightly different phraseology, by Freud.

In particular, the exhaustion of mental and spiritual effort, and the consequent state of passive resignation and self-surrender, which occur in the crisis of the conversion, will naturally prepare the way for the emergence, often explosive, of such subconscious or unconscious factors. But the objective reference to God which characterises the experience will be due to the fact that these repressed ideas represent previous religious beliefs. Where such a reference exists, in other words, where the mental revolution is really a spiritual conversion, a previous state of religious belief, and of membership in some religious society, is sure to have existed, and in such cases the psychical excitement just fires pre-existing fuel and kindles it into a blaze. The suddenness and vehemence, then, of the experience will be due to the psychic temperament, but the objective reference will be due to these religious beliefs, as also will be the permanence of the conversion, where it exists, and the enlistment of the will in the service of God. Assuming that these emergent beliefs are true, great religious value will belong to the vitalising enthusiasm which establishes them as the prominent and dominant power in life.

Thus, a religious conversion may be said to depend, for its suddenness and vehemence, upon the peculiar psychic condition of the person experiencing it, and upon previous beliefs for its supernatural reference. It follows that the question which is often debated, whether the sudden excitement and instantaneous change, which mark such conversions, are themselves a proof of supernatural agency, or whether the conversion itself is due to natural psychic processes, involves a confusion of things which are quite separate and distinct. The *force* is caused by temperament and underground psychic processes, but the *form* of the

experience is caused by previous religious belief; and it is a combination of the two, not the psychic upheaval alone, which constitutes a religious conversion; its supernatural reference depends upon the beliefs, and its supernatural value and validity upon the truth of the beliefs. If religious belief is not present in some form or other, the psychic disturbance will have no religious colour; and any change or transformation of character which may ensue will be due to other influences and states of mind.

Lastly, Conversion may take the form of a reversal of the whole religious scheme of life; it will not be a process of turning from indifference or sin, but of turning from one religion to another. In this case a certain belief is strongly and vividly present to the mind, and the conversion consists in its sudden abandonment in favour of a rival creed. The most obvious and striking example of such a change, occurring suddenly and marked by strong emotion, is found in the conversion of St. Paul. The supernatural reference in the "Who art thou, Lord?" and in the "What would'st thou have me to do?" is very obvious, and the peculiarity lies in the sudden acceptance of a religion which, on religious grounds, he had been attempting to annihilate. "I was unknown by face to the churches of Judæa which were in Christ: but they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed" (Gal. i, 22–3).

The explanation is suggested by the words, "it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." A feeling of respect and admiration for Christ and Christianity, probably due to a recollection of St. Stephen's speech and martyrdom, had been repressed and deliberately rejected, but had been growing all the time, and working underground in the unconscious tract of the Apostle's mind: it was pricking secretly all the time

that he was consciously kicking against it, till at last it was ready to break out into a conscious and willing acceptance of Christ in response to the appeal made on the road to Damascus. And the fruits of this conversion must be held to be a strong indication of the reality of the supernatural appeal thus made, in view of its upholding and inspiring power in the midst of the manifold difficulties and discouragements of his missionary career.

This concludes what I wanted to say about Conversion, but in this chapter I am linking it with another phase of religious experience to which the term Speculation may be applied: a phase of arguing and questioning on religious matters. At first sight, indeed, it would seem that Speculation, in this sense, has nothing at all in common with Conversion, the one being a matter of hot emotion, the other a matter of cold reasoning. But they share the characteristic of being equally epochs of transition and unsettlement, and in each case leading to a maturer type of experience. Speculation may seem to be unattended by passion or excitement (though this is not always true), but it may be as epoch-making in the course of religious development as the most full-blooded and violent form of conversion. The two forms of experience, then, are similar in their working, and are also often closely connected in order of time. And when the two phases have been passed through, religious experience will be found to have become something deeper and more vital, something grounded in conscience and will and intellect, in addition to its manifestations in emotion and imagination and other-worldly sentiment. Experience depends, for its validity, upon belief; so the examination and confirmation of belief has a natural place in connection with the growth of spiritual experience, and, indeed, in view of the spiritual as well as mental state of mind involved, is itself a definite

phase of such experience. It would be outside of the scope of this book to go into detail on the subject; a specimen of the discussions which I have in mind will be found in Chapter I. I will here content myself with a quotation from Baron von Hügel, who has done such valuable work in bringing together the various factors which make up the life of religion. After mentioning the earlier and more childish form of purely external and institutional religion, he continues, "soon there wakes up another activity and requirement of human nature, and another side of religion comes forth to meet it. . . . The very impressiveness of external religion stimulates indeed the sense of awe and wonder, but it awakens curiosity as well. The time of trustful questioning, but still of questioning, first others, then oneself, has come. Here it is the reasoning, argumentative, abstractive side of human nature that begins to come into play. Facts have now in my mind to be related, to be bound to other facts, and men to men; the facts themselves begin to stand for ideas or to have the latter in them or behind them. The measuring-rod seems to be over all things. And religion answers this demand by clear and systematic arguments and concatenations: this and this is now connected with that and that; this is true or this need not be false, because of that and that. Religion here becomes Thought, System, a Philosophy."[1]

But we must remember (what Von Hügel himself is always impressing upon us in his books) that Reason or Speculation is only one element of religion, and must not be isolated from the other elements, namely, Membership in a great Corporate Body or Institution on the one hand and Mystical devotion on the other. So we ought to be sure that in conducting these critical inquiries we are putting the whole of ourselves into the work; not merely one part of ourselves.

[1] *The Mystical Element of Religion*, Vol. I, pp. 51–2.

As I suggested above, any scheme of religion which is to be acceptable must satisfy our concrete personality of mind and heart and will; and it is a great fallacy to suppose that criticism in religious matters can be undertaken successfully by abstract, isolated intellect. Intellect, by itself, might fashion a trim, orderly and precise system of religion, with everything clear and lucid, where there is nothing to jar or perplex, where any element of mystery or incomprehensibility has been carefully dusted away with a feather-broom; but the God enthroned in such a system would not be a God at all. A God who can be weighed and measured, and analysed and grasped by our finite intelligence, would not have anything divine about him; *pace* Kant, a "Religion within the Limits of Pure Reason" is a contradiction in terms.

On the other hand, we must call to mind St. Teresa's exclamation, "From silly devotions, good Lord, deliver us," and must recognise the necessary use of reason and will, to prevent religion from evaporating into "sloppy" sentiment. In fact, we might fairly say that the function of true criticism is just to hold together the various departments of truth: history and philosophy; belief and experience; the transcendence and immanence of God; spiritual devotion and the duties of common life; faith and feeling.

VIII

RENUNCIATION

THE experience of other-worldliness consists, as as we saw, in a vague sense of restlessness, of dissatisfaction, of belonging somewhere else, of being strangers and pilgrims on earth. And as we reflect upon it, it comes to consist largely in a disillusionment with what is transitory and material, and an aspiration after the eternal; and more than that, it rests on a sense of kinship with the eternal, of having in our hearts a germ of the eternal—a conviction which makes it, and it alone, the sphere in which we can rest and be satisfied.

But, to a Christian, the eternal has a definite meaning, different from that which is ascribed to it in other quarters. To him it does not signify a fixed and unchanging order of things in the natural world, contrasted with the waywardness and instability of human action, in the sense in which the regularity of the planets' courses is contrasted with the haphazard contingency of human conduct; nor again does it signify a stark immobility and absence of action altogether; neither fixed order of action, nor inaction, but a certain quality of life, is what eternity means to a Christian; a life which is free to exhibit itself in different ways, but which is grounded on union with a perfect, and therefore unchanging, Being. In a word, the eternal is God; and the other-worldly craving for eternity is a craving for union with God. And this union with the Divine, again, has for us a

definite meaning. It does not consist in a high development of the æsthetic sense ; nor in an ecstatic appreciation of the beauties of nature ; nor in scientific discovery ; nor in admiration of the goodness of famous men. Union with God, once gained, will no doubt add fresh truth and insight to all of these departments ; but it is distinct from them, and is not produced by them. It is due to the action of the Holy Spirit, seconded by a strong and strenuous act of co-operation on our part, a two-fold action by which we are translated out of a natural into a supernatural sphere of life. And such a translation is itself reasonable and appropriate because, as suggested just now, we have an other-worldly conviction that we are spiritual creatures, with a spark of eternal life in each of us, which a breath of the Spirit can kindle into flame. In other words, the supernatural sphere is really the natural one for us, and the aspiration of other-worldliness is a congruous and normal human desire.

But, at the same time, the transitory and material world is always about us, and has obtained such a firm grip upon us, distorting our vision and misshaping our ideals, that a very real struggle is necessary from us, together with the help of the Spirit, if we are to make good our footing, and realise our citizenship, in that other world. Thus, other-worldly aspiration, together with the serious experiences of Conversion and Speculation, leads on to, and requires, a fresh experience, an experience of Renunciation of the life lived in and for transitory and material objects, in order that the eternal may be able to grow and expand, and become our own supreme and dominant nature. In the first place, then, devotion to *transitory* interests must be renounced ; we are to transcend the flux of passing things and live on the eternal plane. This does not mean that our life in that sphere will be devoid of change and struggle and development, in

which case it would be a static and stagnant thing; on the contrary our Godward life is to go through stages of growth and apprehension in this world, and in the other too. But, with all this change and development, it is lived in "the heavenlies," because it is rooted and grounded upon God, Who is perfect Life, and with Whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning. What has to be renounced, then, is not the fact of change, but the futile attempt to satisfy a God-given nature with changing things. The spiritual man will hold fast to God through all the flux of becoming, and in reaction against that flux as something inherently unable to satisfy him; whilst the natural man, on the other side, is immersed in a frantic effort to find peace and permanence in a whirl of change; a futile attempt which always and necessarily fails, but is perpetually renewed as long as breath and energy hold out. And (let me repeat) those who renounce, and stand aloof from, this "Hunting of the Snark," are not condemned to immobility and stagnation. For them as for others, there is a time-process, a passing from one stage to another, a struggle, an aspiration, a pursuit; but beneath all that, there is, in them, a fact which gradually reveals itself as their supreme endowment, the consciousness of possessing a germ of the eternal life of union with God. And the presence of this germ or spark of the eternal is not only a cause of their disillusionment with the world as a passing show, but is also a perpetual help and encouragement in each successive stage of the struggle to enter upon their spiritual birthright; whilst, on the other hand, the spiritual life itself is valued and understood more truly in virtue of the struggle to maintain it in the midst of a flux of change.

Secondly, alongside of the transitoriness of the worldly life there is also its *materialism* to be renounced. We live in materialistic surroundings; and in defiance

of Christ's teaching, we tend to be most deeply and anxiously engrossed in material aims and interests. A rising sense of other-worldliness makes us, as we have seen, dissatisfied with material as well as with transient things; and here, too, dissatisfaction leads, or should lead, to renunciation—renunciation of materialism in the sense of absorption in these aims and objects. And the renunciation of it must run on the same lines as the renunciation of transitory interests. The man will still be living in a material environment, just as he continues to live in a transient world. He has his livelihood to earn, his business and social and domestic ties to attend to, and cannot, and ought not as a rule, to shake himself free from them. They are not only necessary, but have, in themselves, apart from the corruption which often spoils them, a real value of their own and, as we shall see, a religious value too.

They all belong to the natural order of things, which is as truly ordained and constituted by God as is the time-process which we have just considered; and it is a serious mistake to allow other-worldliness to make us blind or indifferent to the goodness which may, and often does, belong to them. Natural affection, honest dealing, altruistic effort, zeal for truth, may not always spring from directly religious motives, but we believe that the blessing of the great all-understanding God of the universe is upon them. And, further, this natural order supplies manifold opportunities for religion to use. The points of goodness which I have named are, indeed, really good, but they are, in themselves, in a precarious and unstable position. They are good, but owe their goodness to the God of nature; they are inspired by Him, and only reach their full measure of goodness when they are offered to, and brought into a direct relationship with, Him. The beauty of nature loses its colour,

the natural affections lose their purity, simplicity and strength, unless they are each looked at in relation to God; honesty becomes hard and self-righteous; altruism becomes infected by priggishness and pride; unless they are softened and hallowed by the divine charity which grace supplies. "There is," says Von Hügel in a letter to his niece, "no Grace without the substrate, the occasion, the material, of Nature; and (in the individuals called to the realisation of the type) no Nature without Grace. Do you fully grasp what I am driving at? That I want you, just because you long for Religion, to continue to cultivate, to cultivate more carefully and lovingly, also the interests, the activities, that are not directly religious? And this, not simply because, 'Why, of course, we must eat our dinner; of course, we must have our little relaxations,' but, much more, because without these not directly religious interests and activities, you—however slowly and unperceivedly—lose the material for Grace to work in and on."[1]

What is to be renounced, then, is not the natural and material order itself, which is always with us, and which, directly or indirectly, has much good in it, but the corruption which seeks satisfaction in a material world standing in alienation from, and often in opposition to, God and the purposes for which it was created; what St. Paul calls "the carnal mind," which "is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. viii, 7); and what St. John calls "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," which are "not of the Father but of the world" (1 John ii, 16).

Renunciation in this sense, a renunciation of worldly desires, will often be followed by actual renunciation of worldly possessions; renunciation of the desire will be outwardly expressed in renunciation of the thing

[1] *Selected Letters*, p. 288.

desired. And this will be done, sometimes in order to follow as literally as possible the example of Christ's earthly life, sometimes in order that the eternal life may be lived with fewer of the obstacles and distractions which worldly interests involve. In fact, if renunciation is real, it will exhibit itself in poverty of one of the two possible kinds: either poverty in outward fact, the renouncing of worldly possessions, or in poverty of spirit, a detachment of mind, a freedom from pride and selfishness which enables these things to be used rightly as instruments of the spirit.

If we care to picture the type of experience here described, considered in itself apart from its intermixture with other types, we might set before our mind the figure of a conscientious Christian, a man of culture and intelligence, who abhors ostentation and all other forms of vulgarity, who is scrupulous in fulfilling obligations and liberal in dispensing alms. He is a high-minded gentleman with lofty ideals, and ready to make real sacrifices in order to be true to them; something of an ascetic in his habits, dignified and self-controlled in his behaviour. He renounces and rejects transient and vulgar satisfactions as being unworthy of him and of the other-worldly aims which he sets before himself. Self-realisation on the highest plane would seem to be his ideal. An elect and worthy character: but we cannot quite picture him accompanying Christian through the Valley of Humiliation, or getting rid of his burden at the foot of the Cross. For this, we must go on to another type.

IX

PENITENCE

WE now come to one of the deepest experiences of the Christian life, an experience which in some degree has a place in the earlier phases which have been described, but which usually reaches its true development at a comparatively late stage, and which stands out most distinctly as a new and definite type of spiritual experience. The reason of the lateness of its appearance is that Penitence proceeds from a sense of sin, and that, as a rule, no real grasp of the nature of sin, and of that in which its badness consists, is reached at all early either in the history of the race or in the individual experience of Christian people.

Of course, belief in the wrongness of certain actions is found in the earliest times that history records; but the wrongness was held to consist either in ceremonial irregularities, such as the touching of a dead body or the neglect of "divers washings" and other "carnal ordinances" (Heb. ix, 10), or else in the transgression of taboos, which prohibited various actions in view of a vague sense of danger involved in them through the presence of uncanny and incalculable powers in the world of nature, which might take offence at such actions for some reason or other and punish those who committed them; just as at the present time there are many such social taboos which simply tell us that certain things are not done, for equally unintelligible reasons. But neither the breach

of ceremonial law nor the transgression of taboos contains the essence of what we mean by sin.

A breach of accepted moral laws, or again a breach of laws imposed by the State make, indeed, an appeal to conscience and not merely to nervous apprehensions, and are thus of a different quality, but then they lose that sense of responsibility to spiritual powers, which the more primitive experience expressed and which is an essential mark of any distinctive idea of sin.

This idea in its simplest form implies a belief (1) that there is a God; (2) that He is philanthropically interested in the welfare of His people; and (3) that in return He requires their obedience to His laws. Christianity does not add fresh articles of belief in this matter; it merely explains the ones we have mentioned by stating (1) that the nature of God is love, as is indicated in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity; (2) that His interest in His people is the interest of a father in his children; and (3) that obedience to His laws consists in love to Him and to His other children. "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." It follows, then, that sin is a breach of a two-fold law of love, a law unfolded and inculcated in the various precepts and prohibitions which express the duty of a man's love to his God and to his neighbour. Only when this belief with regard to sin, as rebellion against a law of love, is intelligently held, does repentance become recognised as a duty of paramount necessity.

And, further, the reason why this duty of repentance is denied at the present time, even by people who have some belief in God, lies in their unwillingness for various reasons to admit the reality of sin. The

reality of sin is denied to-day, sometimes on the ground that what is called by that name is really a necessary result of social conditions, and therefore nothing to be ashamed of; sometimes on the ground that "sin" is the act of following instincts, presumably implanted in us by God, and that any wrongness in so doing must be imputed to Him and not to us. The first argument, which is inspired by a righteous indignation against social injustice, ignores the fact (not so very uncommon) of heroic adherence to the Christian code in the midst of abominable surroundings; and it will be found that the second denies the possession of a controlling and directing will-power only when sin is concerned; when virtuous action is in question, full credit is claimed for the exercise of free and responsible volition. Such arguments would seem to be "ratiocinations," in the meaning given to the word in the new Psychology; and what would appear to lie beneath them is an instinctive desire to be rid of the uncomfortable feelings which the ideas of sin and repentance excite. But the conscience of an average Christian brushes such considerations aside, and declares with regard to sin, "I knew it was wrong; I need not have done it; I did it; and I am sorry."

There, then, we have the reasons for the belated appearance, or the non-appearance of penitence at various times. We have first to learn the meaning of sin, as rebellion against God's laws of love; and, again, the reality of sin as an act of doing something which was known to be wrong, and which might have been left undone. Penitence can only be experienced when both the meaning and the reality of sin have come to be understood; for only then shall we feel the shame which belongs to penitence—shame at having at once rejected the love of God and been deaf to the voice of our own conscience. But when we have learnt these two truths, and inwardly digested them, peni-

tence follows as an immediate and necessary consequence. For we are now conscious that a great trust had been committed to us and that we had been unequal to it; that a great love had made its appeal to us and been rejected; that God's gift of free will, and our resulting responsibility, have been wantonly misused.

But it is important to remember that penitence has many different degrees of depth and genuineness; we must not think of it as a clear-cut, uniform, definite state, a state which either exists full-blown or does not exist at all. On the contrary it can run through many gradations, from a state of vague, shamefaced, tongue-tied sorrow and confusion, up to that conviction of utter unworthiness, and that position of complete self-abasement before the glory of God's goodness, which have characterised the greatest saints.

We feel indeed, quite truly, that penitence of some sort at once becomes necessary when sin has been committed; we must put ourselves right with God before we can return to our service and to a re-establishment of our filial relationship to Him; the cry of repentance, "Woe is me for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts," must come before the offer of service, "Here am I; send me." But we are rather apt to think of penitence as something to be professed at once and then done with; as a sort of ticket which we must produce and hand in as a condition of restoration, and for which we have then no further use; it has brought us back to communion, and can now be laid aside. It would, of course, be far truer to say that it is only through our forgiveness and restoration to service and communion that penitence begins to grow to its proper completeness; and, whilst it remains true that there must be some elementary form of repentance before forgiveness is

obtained, this repentance will generally be a very poor and imperfect thing, consisting largely of self-pity for the trouble which sin has brought upon the sinner, as is shown in the cry of the prodigal, "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish of hunger"; or again of regret at having forfeited our self-respect and the respect of our neighbours. That half-hearted repentance was enough, through God's infinite compassion, to win our pardon; then, under the sunshine of His love, that repentance will grow and bear the flower and fruit of mature and lasting penitence. We must remember that it was after the prodigal had been met and welcomed and restored, that the cry of penitence was uttered, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." We might infer, further, that his penitence only grew to its true condition after the banquet had been held in his honour and he had been restored to the intimacies of the old home life. It was after his restoration, and because of it, that his penitence became really deep and thorough, it was only then that he felt the guilt he had incurred in the rejection of such a father.

So, too, in the Mission field, where admission to penance is practised, a wise priest makes the time during which the penitent is excluded from communion as short as possible, in order that by the experience of God's pardon, and by the grace of the sacraments, his penitence may gradually be built up and perfected. So we must grasp the fact that, whilst any highly developed penitence cannot be asked from a sinner at his first turning to God, a continuous and ever-deepening penitence is asked from those who have been long established in the Christian life, and in proportion to the advances which they are making in that life.

Penitence, then, must be founded upon an uncompromising belief in the reality of sin, and is itself a permanent state of mind, and an absolutely necessary factor in the distinctive character of a Christian. But then there is another fact to be considered, and one of great importance. A conviction of sin is implied in penitence, as we have seen above; but though such a conviction of sin calls for and requires penitence, it would, by itself, be more likely to produce despair—a despair of ever being able to shake off sin and fulfil the laws of God. St. Paul was acutely conscious of this problem. Sin was real, and really bad; and the law condemning it was "holy and just and good"; but the result, so far, was merely to make sin appear more exceedingly sinful; to make the sinner feel more deeply the defilement of his sins without offering him any way of purification or escape. He knew what was good, and delighted in it after the inner man; but, being "carnal and sold under sin," he could not follow it in his life; so the commandment which was meant to be "unto life" was found to be "unto death," and the result was misery, discord and despair. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"[1]

Penitence, then, includes something more than the consciousness of having done wrong things which we need not have done; it carries with it also a belief in the possibility of restoration through the redemptive work of Christ, and an assurance that mercy and compassion, as well as righteousness and justice, are in the mind of the divine Law-giver. God is the Father who sent His Son to save us; the Christian's sorrow for sin is united to Christ's redemptive and atoning sufferings, and in Him we find a way of escape from despair. Thus our experience of penitence,

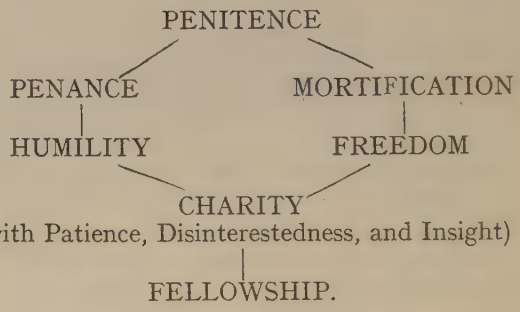
[1] Romans vii, 12–24.

alongside of all its sorrow and self-abasement, is an experience of deliverance and hope.

In a word, penitence brings pardon through Christ's meritorious cross and passion and our union of ourselves with Him in genuine contrition; and the penitence which, as we have seen, must continue throughout our lives, is thereby transformed from a mere bitterness of unavailing remorse into the sober, humble, trustful temper of one who loves much because much has been forgiven.

So far, then, we have seen that penitence implies a real conviction of sin, and a sense of our real responsibility for it, calling up a feeling of regret, and often of disgust with ourselves for having committed it; in pre-Christian days such a conviction was calculated to reduce the sinner to the impotence of despair; for us, Christ's revelation of the Father turns that feeling into one of contrition, or sorrow for having offended a God like that, and links it with a hope of forgiveness; this hope is based on Christ's redemptive sufferings, in which God's love for man stands most clearly revealed, and through which restoration is brought within our reach. But it is important to remember what has been suggested above, namely, that in order to be forgiven and restored we must not only plead the fact of Christ's sufferings for us, but must share them ourselves in and through our penitent contrition. The Christian experience of penitence rejects decisively the idea that mere faith in Christ's work of redemption saves without any co-operation or participation on our part; the penitence which a Christian feels (apart from theories he may form) goes far deeper than that. We are to be "crucified with Him" (Rom. vi, 6; Gal. ii, 20); that is, we are to share the shame and agony of His Passion by the depth and reality of our contrition. Penitence consists in a genuine sorrow for having offended God's love,

a sorrow which will operate in very practical ways. It will expand in two directions, an outward and an inward direction : in Penance on the one side, and in Mortification on the other ; and each of these will have its appropriate off shoots. The following diagram may make this plain.



We begin, as we have seen, in early times, with a vague feeling of repentance for some vaguely understood form of wrong-doing. This becomes the Christian state of Penitence, in the light of the Christian faith. Penitence issues on the one hand in Penance, which is the voluntary acceptance of suffering for past acts of sin. This suffering will be found sometimes in the natural consequences of sin, such as enfeebled health, loss of mental vigour or of worldly position, and so forth ; sometimes in the manifold trials met with in the ordinary course of life, such as the slights and rebuffs, the humiliations, crosses and contradictions, which come upon us from other people ; sometimes in bodily austerities, freely sought and chosen and self-inflicted ; whatever form it takes, it will be a suffering voluntarily and deliberately embraced in union with the shame and outrages of Christ's Passion.

Mortification, the other outcome and expression of Penitence, is the process of killing the inner root from

which all sin grows, namely, the inner principle of self-love, in union with Christ's death upon the cross. This is found to be a comprehensive and laborious work, requiring the utmost determination and perseverance ; it must be a fight to a finish ; " there is no discharge in that war " ; no patchy compromise, or peace by agreement. The soul has to be searched as it were with a tooth-comb. All thoughts or occasions which, however apparently harmless, become by tortuous paths occasions of evil, have to be abandoned. We have to go on steadily with the conflict, even if it involves delay or interruption of " useful work " for the Church ; we must put ourselves right with God before we can work for Him. His kingdom must first come, and be victoriously established in us, if we are subsequently to do His will and not our own. We are to be crucified with Christ, and not want to come down from the cross before we are dead. A serious business ; but, thank God, as we are here joined to Christ in His death, gleams of His risen life shine through the darkness to cheer us on our way.

Of these two forms of Penitence, then, Penance looks back, and is the endurance (if possible, a glad endurance) of punishment for past sins ; Mortification looks on to the future, and is a death unto the whole principle of sin, making a new life possible.

Then Penance and Mortification will each have a natural outcome. Penance will give rise to Humility in our attitude to God and man, in a feeling that we deserve all, and more than all, the sufferings in which Penance consists, and must walk humbly with our God, and get rid of all pride, pomposity, conceit or impatience in our relations with our fellows. And Mortification, in its turn, will issue in Freedom—freedom from all the manifold outgrowths of sin and selfishness, a freedom obtained with a great price of watchfulness and work, by the grace of union with

Christ, a freedom from all that self-seeking and self-absorption which put us out of gear with God and man.

Then further, the Humility which springs from Penance and the Freedom which springs from Mortification will combine to produce the great supreme Christian virtue of Charity or love ; and in doing this, each will make its own appropriate contribution. Humility will contribute Patience and Forbearance, which are essential qualities in real Charity, and which will naturally follow from our consciousness of our own past sins and failures. And Freedom, as described above, will contribute Disinterestedness (whereby we love people for themselves and not for anything that we get from them, together with Insight into their deepest needs and truest good.

And the great virtue of Charity thus constituted will affect our attitude to God as well as to our neighbour, making us more patient in our dedication of ourselves to Him, and more able to love Him for Himself and not for His gifts or rewards.

Lastly, from this great composite grace of Charity will flow the life of Fellowship with God and man, of which we must now go on to speak.

But before going further, let us look back for a moment, and try to form a picture of the penitent man. It will be a picture very unlike the caricature which is in the minds of many people when they speak or think of him. He is *not* a feeble anæmic sort of person, always brooding over the thought of his sins, and torturing his conscience in the effort to remember them with minuter accuracy ; trembling at the idea of future punishment ; wrapped up in himself, and full of misery, anxiety and despair, and of no use to anybody. On the contrary, he tends to be one of the cheeriest and happiest people in the world. He is conscious of himself as a free man, who has escaped

from the old bondage to self, with all the fears and forebodings and unhappiness which belong to it. By the grace of God he has fought a good fight against sin and is prevailing. He is ready to face cheerfully the suffering which past sin entails, and to learn thereby the lessons of patience, humility and charity in the new life which opens before him. In a word, he has knelt before the cross, has left his burden there, and is ready to go out with a firm front to face the big adventure that lies before him, of the service of God in His kingdom. "We adore Thy cross, O Lord, for by means of the cross joy is come into the world."

(c) *FELLOWSHIP*

X

CITIZENSHIP

IT is through Penitence, and as a result of Penitence, that a steady, assured experience of Fellowship with God is attained.

Such Fellowship has, indeed, hovered as a possibility and an ideal before the minds of Christians from the first beginnings of their spiritual experience. The religious emotions of children have expressed a simple, naïve feeling of fellowship, in the sense of friendship and comradeship with God. In the next phase, a phase of admiration and wonder evoked by scenes and events of the Gospel story, the idea of fellowship is less confident, but is present as a vague aspiration after the figure there portrayed and a desire to come closer to Him. It is being groped after, again, tentatively and uncertainly in the unsettlement of conversion and speculation. It is working as a conviction of kinship with the spiritual, and a revolt against unreality and convention, in the experiences of Otherworldliness and Renunciation. And, finally, the vision of a reconciliation, and consequent communion, with God has been operative as an inspiration and encouragement to the soul in the sorrows and travail of its Penitence.

Penitence has, in fact, been a Fellowship with Christ in His agony and death, and is thereby charged with a promise and guarantee of fellowship with Him in His risen life. "If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him" (Rom. vi, 8);

" Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh " (2 Cor. iv, 10). The large life of fellowship with God has now ceased to be a mere ideal or dream, and is made a solid, permanent reality, in which this fellowship is revealed in all its splendour, its power and its claims.

And, first, we may think of such Fellowship as consisting in Citizenship in the Kingdom of God. The consciousness of Citizenship in God's Kingdom is one of the greatest and most momentous experiences of the Christian life. It means nothing less than an uplifting, a translation, a second birth, into a new life. God " hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son " (Col. i, 13). And we know that a proclamation of the Kingdom, its nature, its claims and its laws, was the incessant theme of Christ's teaching. " The kingdom of heaven is at hand " was the message with which He opened His ministry ; repentance was the condition of entrance into it ; citizenship in it was the one thing worth working and fighting for ; it was a prize inciting the violent to take it by force ; it was the pearl of great price, or the hidden treasure, for which all else should be sacrificed ; it was to work as leaven, smiting a new life into the soul ; it was to grow as a mighty tree with shelter for all the world. In a word, it was to be the sphere of a new life of fellowship with God and man. And this new life, infinite and eternal, proves to be the only adequate, satisfying life for men. This fact is declared most emphatically in our Lord's dealing with Nicodemus. Nicodemus begins the conversation with an expression of respectful appreciation of Christ as a teacher come from God, based on admiration for His works. But this complimentary language is at once waved aside, and a quite different issue is propounded : " Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot

see the kingdom of God" (St. John, iii, 3). What really mattered was not respectful admiration of Christ from outside, but membership in His Kingdom and a new birth was the only way of attaining it; that which Nicodemus thought he could admire discreetly at a distance was to seize him, grapple with him, turn him inside out, convert him, regenerate him, make a little child of him, and so set him down as a citizen of a kingdom, in which alone his true life was to be found.

And the experience of Christians bears out the truth of this. The citizenship, the "freedom" of the Kingdom of God, can only be won through birth-pangs and sacrifice. The entrance into it involves a crisis, a wrench, a cataclysm, a fresh beginning, and is achieved as the outcome of the Penitence which we have been considering. Citizenship is, again, a definite, outward expression of the all-embracing virtue of Charity which Penitence makes possible.

And the attainment of this Citizenship is a wonderfully exhilarating experience. We feel that we have now escaped from the stuffy, unwholesome, germ-laden atmosphere of self into the bracing, health-giving air of God's Kingdom and the freedom of His service. There is an emancipation from the "natural" desires of a narrow self-centred existence, which, as St. John of the Cross points out, repel the Spirit of God, and also "weary, torment, darken, defile and weaken the soul." The soul wearies itself in the pursuit of the things which the desires demand; and though it obtains them, is never satisfied; it is tortured by the very intensity of its desires and the anxiety which attends them; it is darkened to higher things, as the air darkened by vaporous clouds cannot clearly reflect an image; it is defiled by unruly desires set on created things, as soot defiles the most beautiful face; and it is weakened through its will being diverted to lower

objects, and dissipated amongst the multitude of them.[1]

These desires, resisted and conquered in Penitence, are to be transcended and left behind in the deeper reality and wider horizon of the Kingdom of Christ. And the experience of this deliverance will naturally be marked by feelings of Enthusiasm and exultation. The Kingdom of God is a great society which both humbles and exalts its members by its grandeur and its goodness, and enlists all their powers and energy for the work which it gives them to do. The work itself may be such as, in other days, would have seemed to them mean, dull, and unpleasant, with nothing in it to be proud of; but now "the spirit of glory and of God rests upon it" (1 St. Peter, iv, 14), and they exult in the day of small things, which grow to spiritual greatness, and become as high as the highest, because done in loyalty to the King and for the good of the Kingdom; "His will is their peace"; and Contentment appears as a second mark of their experience.

Again, the experience of citizenship enables them to do their work not only with contentment, but with Confidence and trust, because it is not only done for the sake of Christ the King, but is also backed by His wisdom and power, and so will find its context and bear its part in the fulfilment of His own great purposes. The ends at which Christ is aiming may well be quite beyond their powers of comprehension, but they are sure that the faithfulness with which they do their little bit of service is taken up and used in the execution of those ends; just as the errand boy who directs envelopes and runs messages is really co-operating with the great head of the firm in carrying out his objects. The experience, then, of Citizenship in God's Kingdom has three characteristic marks: first, Enthusiasm inspired by the grandeur of the sphere to which

[1] *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book I, Chapters vi–x.

Penitence has guided them, and issuing in eagerness to make good their footing in it; secondly, a humble Contentment with the position assigned to them in the Kingdom, a contentment grounded on a sense of their sins and unworthiness, and shown in a loyal acceptance of every commission entrusted to them; and, thirdly, a sure Confidence that work done in that spirit will have its effectiveness, and indeed plays an important part in the advance and welfare of the Kingdom as a whole.

But this great Whole, in which we are members, expresses itself to us not only as God's Kingdom, but also as the Christian Church. The complicated relationship between Kingdom and Church is itself a question which lies quite outside the limits of this essay; we can only touch it so far as each of them impresses special marks upon the experience of Citizenship.

The Kingdom of God impresses us as something universal and everlasting, as a great comprehensive design mapped out as a revelation of His glory and beauty and love. It comprises all creation; includes on the one hand, the Angels and Archangels and the whole company of the saints in Paradise, and on the other, the whole realm of life and matter in our universe; its centre and head-quarters are in Heaven. So far as its human department is concerned, it exists as an ideal, in the sense that it has no visible organisation, and is content to depend, for its actual realisation, upon the free choice of those who offer it their spiritual allegiance.

In most of these points the Church offers a contrast to the Kingdom. The Church would seem to be limited both in its scope and its duration; its sphere is limited to mankind, but it has to do with the whole multitude of baptised people, whether they are living spiritual lives or not; and, further, its existence continues only as long as the present order of our world exists.

It may be described as a special department of God's Kingdom, working under limiting conditions of time and space; or, again, in view of the position to which our race has been reduced by sin, as a School in which people may be brought back to God, be taught the meaning of membership in His Kingdom, be provided with the means of fulfilling their obligations, and so be prepared for the exercise of a fuller and more perfect citizenship in the Kingdom in Heaven. Each description would be true in its own way. The Church, like the Kingdom, has a divine Head, and is essentially social in its constitution, being a fellowship or brotherhood existing for spiritual purposes; it is thus a special, visibly organised department of the Kingdom. The alternative description of it, as a School, emphasises the fact that its work lies amongst mankind as a corrupt and disordered race, and that it depends, for its ministry, not only on the heavenly Father, as the impassible, omnipresent Creator, whose pure glory fills Heaven and earth, but also on Christ, incarnate and crucified, as its Saviour, and on the Spirit as its indwelling mentor and guide and life-giver. The Church is, thus, God's organ of salvation, provided by divine appointment with a Creed and Sacraments of grace, for the enlightenment and strengthening and healing of its members. Thus its work is ancillary and preparatory; it trains its people for citizenship in a vaster society and a never-ending fellowship.

At the end of the world, when resistance to God will cease, these functions will be no longer required, the Church will be absorbed into the Kingdom, the Kingdom will become a visibly organised society, and God will be all in all. We may conclude, then, that Kingdom and Church are essentially one and the same; the main points of difference are that the Church is limited in duration, and has a special, remedial function to perform, in continuance of the redemptive work of

Christ; whereas the Kingdom is a larger Whole, enveloping the Church, and incorporating it into itself when the Church's work is done. This two-fold fact, of unity in diversity, is illustrated by our Lord's own language in speaking of the Kingdom of Heaven, or of God. Sometimes He seems to be describing it as a great spiritual ideal, realised in men's inward and individual allegiance to a recognised sovereignty of God; sometimes as the definite group of the disciples who formed the germ of what grew into a Church as an organised society; sometimes as the manifestation of God's rule in visible power and glory at the end of the world.

If we now compare the spiritual experience inspired by membership in the Kingdom with that inspired by membership in the Church, we see, as would be naturally expected, that the marks of the former experience are continued in the latter, but in a deeper and soberer form. The first of those marks which we considered, the feeling of Enthusiasm and thankfulness at escaping from a degrading bondage to a narrow self, and being translated into a great society, becomes now an outburst of praise and Adoration in view of the redemptive sufferings of Christ which, endured once upon the cross, are shown forth in every Eucharist, and through which the reality of our deliverance is assured.

The second mark, of Contentment with our position, however lowly, in God's Kingdom, is deepened into a Consecration of our lives, through union with the life of Christ, to whatever lowly duties the Master may lay upon us. And, lastly, the Confidence, which the bare fact of membership in the Kingdom produces, is found to rest upon, and be identified with, an experience of Sacrifice, namely, the offering of ourselves as a reasonable, holy and lively sacrifice to His service, a sacrifice which, as united to the redemptive power of Christ's work, can never fail of effectiveness.

And we may add, further, that this experience which has been described as issuing from the general fact of our membership in the Church, will often appear to be prompted especially by reception of the Church's Sacraments. The Sacraments are, essentially, bonds of Fellowship uniting us to God and to our neighbours, and they naturally yield a specially keen experience of the fellowship we have just been considering. In fact, a devout Churchman's experience of the fellowship which his Church inspires, is very frequently derived simply from his life as a communicant, and the ties with which the Sacrament is felt to be uniting him to God and man.

Such, then, is the fellowship which consists in Citizenship, where the narrow, puny, individualistic self is transcended, where the soul expands and soars, where a man's personality is developed and enriched by the acceptance of fresh relationships to God and his neighbour. The Citizen of God's Kingdom, unlike most people to-day, gives the impression of having got what he wants out of life; there is none of that nervy restlessness about him which is so common a trait of his contemporaries. He is quiet and self-possessed in his demeanour, but at the same time is apt to surprise his friends by an ebullient overflow of high spirits which they can attribute to no satisfactory cause. He is a man, again, of wide sympathies and a deep insight into the connectedness of things, which enables him to see all sorts of rich and rare qualities in ordinary commonplace people and things, and which makes him alert to take up bits of work which other people despise, but which he is convinced will serve great ends and lead to big results. The world pronounces him "a thoroughly good-hearted fellow, but not quite normal, you know," the abnormality consisting in the society to which he belongs and whose life he lives.

XI

COMMUNION

THE Fellowship of Citizenship is, as we have seen, an experience of eager allegiance to God's service in His Kingdom and Church. And Citizenship is certainly the primary and obvious and natural form which Fellowship suggests; it is concerned primarily with outward actions, with character shown in conduct. The fellowship of a good citizen is a practical thing, easily recognised and appreciated, whether it is exhibited in a secular State or the Christian Church.

But Christian Fellowship does not stop in Citizenship; it goes deeper. The man who has found himself and his true life in an active membership of Christ's Kingdom will also find the source and support for that allegiance in fellowship with Christ Himself. Not that he will become slack in that allegiance to the Kingdom and his zeal for its welfare; but he comes to feel that, if the allegiance is to be pure and strong, it must issue from a hidden spring of communion with the King. This truth has been suggested in the last chapter, when we alluded to the fact that in many cases the experience of Citizenship is itself an experience of sacramental life.

We are to think, however, of Communion now in a larger sense, comprehending the whole of the soul's closer relationship with God, though the Sacrament will naturally remain in a very real sense the nourish-

ment and expression of such relationship. Communion, as we here deal with it, means a personal intercourse with Christ, and the development of this Communion is found in the attainment of a closer, deeper intimacy in that intercourse.

Now, there can be no real intercourse between two people unless they are a good deal in each other's company, and interchange their thoughts in speaking to one another. Communion with Christ, then, means that we speak to Him and listen to Him; in other words, prayer, in the truest sense of the word, is the essence of Communion in the wide sense in which we are here concerned with it. Prayer is the lifting up of the soul to God, and the listening for answers or messages from Him to us; and it is in this that Communion consists.

Moreover, growth in the intimacy of this Communion with Christ depends on an obvious condition. When we talk to someone much wiser and better than ourselves, we may, and probably do, begin with a self-centred monologue, explaining at length our wants and the help that we need, and the exact form which that help must take if it is to satisfy us. But later we change our procedure and learn to listen to him, and trust to his greater wisdom and insight to help us in the right way. And this holds good of our intercourse with God in prayer. The earlier form of prayer, when everything is done by ourselves, and when that which we do is to present very definite petitions for very definite objects is, no doubt, accepted by God in proportion to the earnestness and faith with which it is offered, and answered by Him in the way which He sees to be best; but, though such prayer may be very real and profitable, it cannot be said to rise to the level of intercourse with God. We do all the talking, and, when we have finished, get up and go away; and the only part left for Him to play is either to grant

or refuse to grant the petitions we have laid before Him.

But this hardly seems the way in which a true relationship with God is expressed or a deep Communion with Him attained. Progress in prayer is achieved in proportion as we aim, not so much at being good talkers to God as at being good listeners to Him. "I will hearken what the Lord God will say concerning me; for he shall speak peace unto his people and to his saints," is the Psalmist's description of this communion (Psalm lxxxv, 8); and St. James's words, "let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak" may be applied to our intercourse with God as well as with other people. If we would gain the experience of personal communion with Him, we must wait upon Him humbly, with acts of penitence, thanksgiving, faith and love, with special reference perhaps to our last reception of the Sacrament; offering ourselves to His service, and asking Him to tell us what we are to do and to help us to do it. Very few words are wanted; we are just to rest quietly in His presence; together with this offering of ourselves, we can mention the trials and perplexities which trouble us, and the names of people for whom we want to pray, trusting in each case to His love and wisdom to answer as He sees to be best. And God will speak, in answer, to our souls. Sometimes (1) what we experience will be a sense of joy and happiness in the realisation of His presence and love. Sometimes (2) it will be the uplifting of our hearts to a higher and purer plane, where we shall be wrapped in peace, and fore-armed against the worries and temptations of life. Sometimes (3) it will be a living and vivid hold upon truths which have previously been only conventionally accepted, such as, for instance, the intercommunion between the Persons of the Holy Trinity, or the meaning of the Catholicity of the Church as a test of sympathy as well as a bond of unity, or the goodness in

the characters of other people. Sometimes (4) it will be a practical command or commission, conveyed in the form of a suggestion which He causes to arise in our minds, and which grows clearer and stronger as we attend to it, as, for instance, the idea of going to see someone whom we should not otherwise have thought of visiting. We may be sure that it would never have occurred to Ananias to call on Saul of Tarsus at Damascus, or to St. Philip to join himself to the chariot of Queen Candace's eunuch, unless they had been aware of a message telling them to do these things. It will be objected, " these were divine commands coming to these men from without, and thus quite different from mere ideas arising in our minds." But the real difference is not that God spoke to them and does not speak to us, but that they had open and receptive minds and we have not. God's word came and spoke to their hearts, and they thought it quite natural that this should happen, and accordingly listened and obeyed. We, on the contrary, are so busy with our own pursuits, so materialistic in our outlook, and always in such a desperate hurry to get somewhere or other in the " point to point race " of modern life, that we have no time to wait or listen or receive. So God calls, but we do not hear ; He speaks, but we do not answer.

We must remember, too, that these communications from God to the human soul, are a very delicate matter, and can easily be disregarded or misunderstood. They often take the form, at first, of a still small voice, whispering messages to the soul which can easily remain unnoticed in the hubbub and racket of the world ; or of a momentary gleam of illumination which only grows into a steady light as we fix our attention upon it. Thus we see, in the call of Isaiah, God begins, by making a revelation of His glory, and then waits to see how the Prophet takes it. The

vision might have been disregarded or misunderstood, and so the vocation have been missed; but Isaiah gazes at it, and makes his answer in an act of profound self-humiliation: "woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King the Lord of hosts." So, the intercourse can continue; the man's iniquity is taken away and his sin purged, and God speaks now more clearly to him: "whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" and with the Prophet's reply, "here am I; send me," the vocation is clinched and a message given (Isa. vi, 1–8).

There will be different degrees and modes of receptivity in different people, and in the same person at different stages of his spiritual life; but the general line of progress is the same in all; it leads from a state in which our mind is very busy to a state in which it is more quiet; from a state in which we are active and argumentative to one in which we rest simply and naturally in God; from the state in which God's grace is, as St. Teresa says, drawn laboriously by us in buckets from a well, to a state in which it descends like showers of rain upon the thirsty soul. But in all of these states, so long as they are states of conscious experience, there are always two factors to be recognised; the work of God, and the work of the soul; and, though the latter becomes less prominent as progress is made, it is never superseded. A real effort of the soul is required if the attitude of quiet receptivity is to be maintained; the showers of God's grace only descend on a soul that is thirsting for it, like the parched soil gasping for the rain; even there, the human and divine factors are both at work; progress in this type of experience does not involve the elimination of the human factor, but an ascetic discipline by which it becomes adapted to receive and understand divine communications.

This fact ought to be obvious, but nevertheless is often ignored. It is ignored on the one hand when, as was noticed above, we monopolise all the talking in our communications with God, and do not stay to hear what He wishes to say to us; and it is ignored on the other hand by those who speak of "purely supernatural" experiences, in which no human operation is to be recognised at all. Even in the state of deep absorption in God, which is called ecstasy or rapture, the faculties of the mind are not completely suspended; there remains (St. Teresa tells us) a *consciousness* of the fruition. "It is understood," she says, "that the fruition is of a certain good containing in itself all good together at once; but this good is not comprehended. The *senses are all occupied in this fruition* in such a way that not one of them is at liberty, so as to be able to attend to anything else, whether outward or inward." Occasionally, but not often, there may be a complete failure of the senses; "it has happened to me occasionally to lose them wholly—seldom, however, and then only for a short time. But in general they are in disorder; and though they have no power whatever to deal with outward things, there remains the power of hearing and seeing; but it is as if the things heard and seen were at a great distance, far away."[1]

And, in another place, she writes, "the soul being thus purified, God unites it to Himself in a way known only to Him and the spirit, nor does even the latter so understand what happens as to be able to explain it to others afterwards. The mind, however, had not lost the use of its faculties, for this ecstasy does not resemble a swoon or a fit, in which nothing either interior or exterior is felt. What I do understand is that the soul has never been more alive to spiritual

[1] *Life of St. Teresa*, by Herself (Thomas Baker), Chapter xviii, 2, and Chapter xx, 23.

things, nor so full of light and of knowledge of His Majesty as it is now."[1] Thus, if the operation of the human factor is entirely suspended, the experience comes to resemble a swoon, and ceases to be an intercourse with God. If, then, in the ecstatic experiences of a great contemplative Saint like St. Teresa the mind is conscious and at work in some or other of its faculties, it is not for ordinary people to expect or desire anything different for themselves. When it is said that we should wait quietly upon God and attend to communications from Him, this does not mean that we are to try to make our mind an absolute blank, and to try to think about nothing (an attempt in which the mind is not passive at all but very hard at work, and in a very unprofitable manner); what it does mean is, that we are to rest upon God in faith and love and trust, concentrating our mind upon Him, and listening for indications of His will.

If a spiritual communion with God is to be carried on with fruitful results, it would seem necessary that the following conditions should be fulfilled. First, (1) we must be content, as has just been suggested, to assume an attitude of humble attention upon him, purged from all taint of pride and self-assertion. (2) Following from this, we must have open and receptive minds, ready to accept messages which may call us to follow unfamiliar or unattractive paths of thought or action. We are so apt to be enslaved by habitual modes of action and stereotyped ways of looking at things, that we find it very difficult to shake ourselves free and accept new impressions or carry out new orders. We become case-hardened, and automatically repel fresh light or fresh responsibilities. We are thus in danger either of turning a deaf ear to God's messages, or of inventing excuses for evading them. But (3) if these experiences are to be accepted with confidence

[1] *Interior Castle, Sixth Mansion*, Chapter iv, 3-4.

as authentic communications from God, we must take precautions against possible deception. These precautions are admirably stated by St. Teresa,[1] whose critical acumen was as great as her spiritual receptivity. In the first place (*a*) these communications must be confronted with the historic revelation of God's will in the teaching of Christ and the Church. "Take no more notice of any speeches you hear which disagree with the Holy Scriptures, than if you heard them from Satan himself. . . . Always resist them; then they will leave you, for they have little strength of their own." Then (*b*) divine communications are "operative" "when our Lord speaks, it is at once word and work," giving strength, light, peace and consolation to the soul, whilst "words formed by the understanding effect nothing." In the third place (*c*) the tree is tested by its fruit. Communications from God produce "a great calm and a devout and peaceful recollection which dwell in the soul, together with a desire to please God." Again, (*d*) they are deeply impressed upon the memory, and carry with them a steadfast conviction of their verity. Lastly, (*e*) the man who receives them is conscious of listening to something which constrains his attention, whereas, "if it be anything which the understanding has fashioned, however cunningly it may have done so, he sees that it is the understanding which has arranged that locution, and that it is speaking of itself."

Further, (4) it is necessary, if we would take up a right attitude in these matters, that a position of paramount importance should be given to the will, whilst the other activities of the mind, such as emotion, imagination, and discursive reasoning fall into the background. The reason is that the will is the steadiest and most practical of our faculties, and it is through

[1] *See* the *Life of St. Teresa*, Chapter xxv, 1–11; *Castle, Sixth Mansion*, Chapter iii, 4–24.

the will that we can best put ourselves into the attitude of loyal obedience to God's directions. The concentration of the will upon Him is, in fact, an essential condition of any genuine communion with Him. Moreover, when that condition is fulfilled, a real communion is possible for all.

It is sometimes said that these spiritual experiences really depend upon temperament, and are therefore only open to people of a special disposition and psychical outfit. And it is true that the vividness of these experiences, and the facility with which they are received, are affected to an appreciable extent by temperamental differences; but, whilst these differences touch the readiness and rapidity with which the messages are assimilated, it remains true that the concentrated will is the matter of crucial importance. When this is present, a real intercourse with God is practicable for people of the most phlegmatic and prosaic disposition; and when it is absent, temperamental alertness and agility easily give rise to day-dreams and hallucinations, and divert our attention from Him altogether.

Now, it is obvious that in spiritual experience of this type the objective reference is strongly marked; these states have what James calls a "noetic quality"; they are, he says, "states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect"[1]; there is in them a sense of what von Hügel calls "givenness"; an experience of something more than imaginations, aspirations, reflections or petitions of our own; an awareness of a message or command of some sort coming from without; of a "word of the Lord" communicated to us. In fact, the special mark of this fellowship of Communion is that it consists in an immediate awareness of God, and a sensitiveness to His presence and operations in the soul. It is not a

[1] *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 380.

pathological obsession of a semi-hysterical nature, as used to be supposed, but just a growingly live sensitiveness to God's presence and a growingly keen intuition into His will. It thus sums up and develops and explains the earlier religious experience of prayer and worship, by seeing in that experience a step towards conscious communion with a God who is actually present to guide and teach; and it insists on the paramount necessity of a pure heart, a mortified will, and a receptive mind as conditions of such communion. There is no doubt that this Communion, with its claim to a real spiritual contact and intercourse with God, is religious experience in its most arresting and definite form; and it would probably be true to add that the validity of religious experience as a whole stands or falls with the validity of this Communion in which it seems to come to itself, and to be summed up and interpreted. That is, our experience of the power of religion to help and strengthen, to purify and transform and uplift, is itself the germ of a consciousness of God present in our hearts; the "power of religion" is seen to mean the "presence of God," and the consciousness of this presence, in varying degrees of apprehension, is what is meant by the experience of Communion.

It is sometimes urged that there is no reason for asserting a special and peculiar presence of God in the phase of experience with which we are here concerned. It is argued that God is always present with us, that the whole of our religious experience from beginning to end flows from that presence, and that in this respect the phase of spiritual Communion does not differ from the other phases of spiritual experience. Now, it is undoubtedly true that God is present in every phase of our religious life, and that this presence is the source from which "all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works proceed"; but then God's

presence is not the same as our consciousness of it. His presence is with us in many different ways and with many different results. He can be present in our hearts, purifying our lives and ways of thought by an ethical uplifting, without the awakening of any directly religious aspirations or convictions. In other cases His divine power will be producing graces of Christian faith and character, and be recognised as producing them, without our being aware of His personal presence; we are conscious of His gifts without recognising the presence of the giver. But in the experience of Communion, as I have tried to describe it, there is this recognition of God's presence as well as of His gifts. This matter of the modes and results of His presence is well analysed by St. John of the Cross. "We must remember," he says, "that there are three ways in which God is present in the soul. The first is His presence in essence, not in holy souls only, but in wretched and sinful souls as well, and also in all created things; for it is by this presence that He gives life and being, and were it once withdrawn all things would return to nothing. This presence never fails in the soul. The second is His presence by grace, whereby He dwells in the soul, pleased and satisfied with it. This presence is not in all souls; for those who fall into mortal sin lose it, and no soul can know in a natural way whether it has it or not. The third is His presence by spiritual affection. Such is the nature of this presence that the soul felt there was an infinite being hidden there, out of which God communicated to it certain obscure visions of His own divine beauty" (*Spiritual Canticle*, Stanza xi, 2–4). This last mode is further explained in *Mount Carmel* (Chap. v, 3) as "that union and transformation of the soul in God by love which is only then accomplished when there subsists the likeness which love begets; . . . a supernatural union, which

takes effect when two wills, the will of God and the will of the soul, are conformed together, neither desiring ought repugnant to the other."

It is this last mode of God's presence which appears in what I have called the experience of Communion (and more fully in that of Union which is still to be mentioned), where there is not only a reception of His grace but also a living and loving consciousness of His transforming presence in the soul.

There will, naturally and necessarily, be different degrees, and successive stages, in this Communion, in proportion as the soul is gradually transformed into the likeness of God. And, apart from this, the growth in this intercourse with Him will not be an undisturbed process. There will be blank spaces, gaps, interruptions, times of dryness, darkness and dereliction, when any communion seems to be impossible, and no message or command, no revelation or consolation, reaches the waiting soul. Sometimes these trials will be due to the man's own fault, to some lapse into old faults or failure of loyalty to Christ, whereby the current of divine visitation is cut off; sometimes they will be designed to test the reality and constancy of his love, to show whether that love is really a love of his own spiritual comfort or a steady and disinterested love of God. In the one case they may be described as a call to repentance; in the other a searching and refining fire. And they do good work, in the one case by deepening his humility, in the other by purifying his devotion; in both, they will have the identical result of deepening the joy which will be felt when the intercourse is restored.

Such, then, is the experience of the fellowship of Communion: a first-hand experience of God through Christ, mediated by the Holy Spirit. It will be exhibited outwardly in varying, and seemingly contradictory, modes of behaviour. At one time the man is

obviously radiating extreme joy and happiness; at another he is, as clearly, a victim of deep depression and discouragement. At one time he appears as an absent-minded visionary, whose thoughts and musings are far away from his earthly environment; at another he is active and alert, throwing himself heart and soul into some very definite bit of work. He is thus an enigma to most of his neighbours, whilst by those who know he is seen to be throbbing to the ebb and flow of divine communications, and reacting appropriately and spontaneously to their pressure upon his soul. And beneath all these changes and fluctuations there is evidence of a deeply rooted calm of mind, a peace of God which passes all understanding, a divine peace which is a foretaste of heaven, and in which he lives as a friend of God.

XII

UNION

WE have considered the form of Fellowship which consists in Communion with God. The essential mark of this experience is that it is a personal intercourse of man with God, an intercourse which varies greatly at different times, or with different people, but which always conveys a consciousness of God's presence, and a consequent uplifting and enlightenment of the soul in the ways that have been mentioned.

Naturally and necessarily, such Communion with God requires a resolute effort at purification of the whole nature, and an attitude of quiet waiting upon Him. Such a purification aught not to be beyond the power of anyone who is in earnest, since it depends mainly on moral qualities in the will, not in any exceptional powers of the intellect; but at the same time it involves considerable difficulties of its own, since self-discipline, simplicity, and concentration are never easy, least of all in an unstable, restless age like ours. We have, however, the unanimous testimony of those who have tried hardest to practise it, that it brings with it a greater happiness and sense of attainment than can be had through any other activity.

Communion, then, consists in a close and intimate intercourse of the soul with God, but it is, as we have seen, an intercourse which is confined to certain occasions. This two-fold fact accounts for the rapid changes of spiritual temperature in those who experi-

University of Southern California Library

ence it, changes which transport them in a moment from a state of blissful rapture to a state of darkness and dereliction. Moreover, the nearer they draw to God in their times of spiritual intercourse, the greater becomes their spiritual suffering when the intercourse is interrupted. This suffering, which is known to the Saints as "the great desolation," is the price which they have had to pay for the closeness of their Communion with God. And we can understand the naturalness of this. They have staked their all upon God; they have forsaken and renounced the world and all the satisfactions which the world can offer; God has been their closest friend, and the experience of that friendship has been the one thing that made life worth living; to be deprived of that is to be plunged into outer darkness and utter misery. They have followed the gleam, have fought their way upwards, conquering worldly temptations and rejecting worldly consolations, and now seem, after all, to be abandoned to a cold dreary emptiness of heart through the withdrawal of God's presence from them. All they can do is to hold on by the sheer force of a disciplined will, and to set their face as a flint, until they have served their term of banishment and are readmitted to God's presence. This great desolation, then, is the supreme form of fiery trial to which God's friends are subjected; but all through it, down at the bottom of their souls, there survives a dim trust in His love and mercy, and a peace which that trust brings with it.

It may be objected that, if the high state of Communion with God involves these violent fluctuations and this acute spiritual suffering, there cannot be said to be much joy or happiness in religion, at any rate in its higher reaches. To which it must be answered, first, that joy and happiness are not the object aimed at in religion; they are to be regarded, rather, as

extras thrown in by the way, so far as they are needed, when the soul is steadily seeking the kingdom and righteousness of God; and, secondly, that the Communion which we have been considering is not the final experience of those who seek Him. It was described above as "a close and occasional intercourse" with God; the fact of it being occasional is the cause of the pain which is experienced, and suggests that it may lead on to an intercourse which will be both close and permanent, that is, to a steady, uninterrupted union of the soul with God. *Why*, then, was the Communion, which has been described, necessarily occasional, and therefore the cause of this suffering?

The answer is to be found in the sharp contrast and opposition which, in that phase of experience, is drawn between life in the world and life in God. There is, in this experience, a firm and true conviction of the vanity of worldly aims and interests, and a firm resolve to conquer temptations to a worldly life. The soul feels that in seeking to find its way to God it must "come out and be separate" from a world which lies in wickedness; it feels that it is a stranger and exile upon earth; that glimpses of its true home have been given to it in its Communion with God, and that, when the Communion ceases, it is banished from that true home, and relegated to an alien and hostile sphere.

The fact is that, in the language of philosophy, these people are taking a dualistic view of the universe. In their struggle against vanity and wickedness in the world they forget that after all the world was made by God, and that He is "the God of Nature as well as the God of Grace"; accordingly they think of the natural world as standing in a relation of opposition to the spiritual world in which God is found; and though by a sustained effort they can raise themselves

for a time to that higher sphere, yet the alien environment in which they feel that they are living on earth remains as an impediment to permanent intercourse with Him. Their Communion with God could lift them for a time above a world of illusion and tribulation, but the short spells of fruition which this Communion yields are followed naturally by feelings of exile and home-sickness and abandonment.

Such feelings are open to easy and obvious criticism from people who do not understand the cause of them, but it must be remembered that they are experienced by people who are desperately and whole-heartedly in earnest with their devotion to God, who have struggled hard (perhaps harder than their critics) against worldly temptations, and whose attitude to the world as a "City of Destruction" is at any rate grounded on an eager devotion to Him whom their souls love. Moreover, if the critic implies that those who are in this phase of experience will naturally be indifferent to the performance of everyday duties, he is quite wide of the mark. Their work can be done well and conscientiously, and none the less so, but rather more so, because it is accompanied by this inward spiritual suffering, since the work is obviously being done in obedience to God's will, and not for the satisfaction of private desires and ambitions.

But in the state of Union, as experienced by some great Saints, these painful fluctuations cease, because they themselves have been lifted to a higher, completer, and more stable relationship with God, a relationship which is shown in their joyful acceptance of God's will, and their eager readiness to serve Him with equal loyalty and love in whatever condition they may be placed. That earlier experience of occasional intercourse has grown to a state of constant and unbroken Union. God is felt to be with them always and everywhere. Dualism has been transcended; they

no longer bewail the misery of banishment from His presence; rather, the very sense of banishment disappears; God Himself is their home, and is felt to be continually with them; even in the unsatisfactory material world they can be at home with Him, and can serve and adore Him there as truly as in heaven itself.

The world no longer acts as a barrier between the soul and God, making its communion with Him a short and occasional achievement. It continues, indeed, to be an obstacle to perfect fellowship and unclouded union; but it is revealed now as a sphere in which their love of God can have a natural output in "loveliness of perfect deeds," through a devoted service of Him and of their fellow-men. Like St. Paul, they may still desire to "depart and be with Christ, which is far better," but if it is God's will that their life on earth should be prolonged, they accept such indication of His will with peace and contentment. Like Theocrite, or rather the angel who took his place, they "do God's will, to them all one, If on the earth or in the sun."

This state of Union has not inaptly been called the "marriage of the soul with God."

Now, these exalted spiritual experiences are obviously private and personal and subjective, and, even more than other forms of such experience, must be interpreted and objectified by reason if they are to be accepted by others as valid and in any way evidential. The experience itself is strongly felt to be true—more true, indeed, than any other conceivable form of truth; but it must be shown to rest, not merely on its own subjective vividness and strength, but on a rational faith held in common by Christian people. When this is done, it will be "evidential" in the sense that other Christians will recognise in it a real first-hand communion of the soul with God, and will

be encouraged thereby to draw nearer to Him themselves, even though they may not be able to attain to such spiritual heights in their own lives.

The importance of this interpretation is well emphasised by Professor Aliotta, who writes, in an essay quoted from before: "Religious experience would remain shut up in the intimacy of the fugitive moment and would spend the treasure of its riches unless it sought, by making itself known to itself, to preserve itself in the life of the individual and of human society. The agreement of our experiences among themselves and with those of other individuals cannot be obtained if each remains in the immediacy of the life which it has lived, in its incommunicable subjective intuition. It is the conceptual schemes constructed by reflection, and which transcribe these experiences into the universal language of thought, that make it possible to render them clear to the individual and to communicate those intuitions to others. Only by means of these objective expressions can concord be realised. Religion, if it wishes to become a universal possession, flows necessarily into philosophy. Intuition, if it wishes to become eternal, must rise to the level of thought." And again, "It is not the state of ecstasy alone, which constitutes the certain revelation of the reality of God, but the intellectual interpretation which the mystic, restored to himself, makes of what he has experienced."[1]

Accordingly we find the great friends and intimates of God setting their mysterious experiences against a background of philosophy which will give it this intelligible and evidential character. St. John's profound meditations on the mystery of Christ rest on his doctrine of the Logos, the eternal Word who was God, and was made flesh and dwelt among us; and St. Paul's own hidden life "in Christ" is inter-

[1] Essay in *Science, Religion and Reality*, pp. 183 and 175.

preted in the light of his conviction that in Him " are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden " ; that " in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and in Him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power " (Col. ii, verses 2, 9–10) ; whilst St. Catherine of Siena draws out the connection between natural understanding and infused faith, as the basis of the prolonged conversations with God given in her great Dialogue. There is thus suggested a rational theologico-philosophical background for their transcendental experiences ; in other words, these experiences are presented as flowing naturally and appropriately from a reasoned faith in Christ.

Further, in this state of Union, in addition to a general uplifting of the whole nature and an all-permeating sentiment of love and devotion, it often happens that the messages and communications which the soul receives in its intercourse with God are longer and fuller than those experienced in the previous phase of Communion. Thus, in Dame Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love*, and in St. Catherine of Siena's *Dialogue of Divine Providence*, we find comprehensive doctrinal statements and detailed explanations of God's purposes and modes of action, which go far beyond a record of definite vocations under particular circumstances.

In considering these experiences we must bear in mind what has been suggested above as to the conditions under which those simpler messages could be accepted as true and valid,[1] and must also take account of certain influences by which these longer and more elaborate communications are liable to be affected. First, under this head, may be mentioned ideas and preconceptions current at the time or in the country of the persons concerned, including the scientific, social, and political way of looking at things, natural

[1] *See* pp. 94-5.

to that time and place. These pre-existent ideas and ways of thought are moulds into which God's message is poured, and which necessarily determine the phraseology in which it is expressed. The danger of distortions here is not very serious; it affects not so much the substance of the message as the idiom in which it is set out; spiritual experiences are not invalidated by being recorded in pre-Copernican or pre-Darwinian terminology.

Secondly, we have to take account of the influence exerted by the institutional environment in which the Saints were living, with its traditional forms of devotional practice and its instinctive dislike of novelty as of something necessarily disturbing and revolutionary. There has certainly been a real danger, from this quarter, lest God's message should be stripped of something of the fullness and freshness which really belong to it; and the danger will be greatest where the institution exercises the strictest supervision and keeps the tightest hold upon the mind and conscience of the individual. It was very difficult for St. Teresa to listen quietly to God's voice speaking to her when her ecclesiastical superiors were constantly warning her that it was probably the voice of the devil. But this danger was met by her, and can be met by others, by a humble and loyal devotion to God and by the spiritual insight and courage which springs from it. In the third place, the temperament and disposition, the passions or prejudices of the individual recipient may always colour a true communication from God by emphasising in it only those elements which are congenial to himself, and interpreting it accordingly. But in the phase of spiritual life with which we are here concerned, this danger would be very slight and may be ruled out as practically negligible.

Let us take St. Catherine of Siena as a typical

example of this type of experience. St. Catherine was an Italian of the fourteenth century, soaked in its general ways of thought; she was an ardent Papist; had suffered much from unwise direction; had an eager emotional temper, tender to sufferers, but fierce and irascible towards the enemies of the Church; with a bias towards sweeping generalisations, whereby every priest was to her either an "angel on earth" or a "devil incarnate"; and no doubt her great Dialogue is affected in a way by all these facts. But withal it remains a great monument of real spiritual contact and union with God. The Saint certainly did not sit down and deliberately compose a narrative of fictitious experiences; she believed, and rightly believed, that she was speaking to God, and (far more important) listening to Him; and her work bears witness to the fact—unfamiliar and staggering though it may appear—of close and loving intercourse between God and a human soul.

NOTE ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

CHRISTIAN experience envisages belief in Christ, and comprises the manifold and varied impressions which He makes on all sorts and conditions of men, as illustrated in the different types of experience which have been considered. And it is through the Holy Spirit that Christ makes this revelation of Himself in the human soul. It is the Spirit, dwelling in the world, who brings Christ in all His redeeming power to us, and us to Christ, throughout all generations. Apart from the active, energising operation of the Spirit, Christ would have tended inevitably to become a dim figure of past history, still honoured and worshipped by the faithful as a divine Redeemer, but without the present and vivifying touch of One who is with us always even to the end of the world. As Dr. Wheeler Robinson writes, "As God was present in the world through Christ so is God through Christ present in the Holy Spirit." And, again, "The Jesus of history might be superhuman, might be God manifest in the flesh, yet so long as He remained a remote figure of the past, the Church could not say 'our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.' A historical memory is not a fellowship."[1]

Now, in thus attempting to define the work of the Spirit in His relation to the Father and the Son, we are necessarily brought face to face with the doctrine of the Holy Trinity; on which a few words are

[1] *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*, pp. 136 and 148.

needed for the purpose of this essay. There are two points which have to be emphasised. In the first place, we must always start by insisting most strongly on the unity of God; the subtle snares of polytheism can only be avoided by an emphatic assertion that "the Lord our God is one God"; only from this standpoint can we safely proceed to recognise distinctions within the Godhead. But, secondly, subject to this safeguard, distinctions do have to be recognised. God, as perfect Being, cannot be lower than the highest that we know in our own nature; that is, His nature must be personal, or, if we prefer the expression, supra-personal; but personality consists in relationships, and the ascription of personality, in some perfect form, to Him at once implies the existence of conscious relationships within the essential unity of His nature.[1] The Divine Being is "unfolded," as we contemplate It, not into a plurality of separate Beings, but into a distinction of Persons who together make up the fullness of the one indivisible Godhead.

The necessity of thus recognising distinct factors in the Godhead, if It was to be adequately and worthily conceived, has been admitted from very early times, but has expressed itself, or tended to express itself, in ways which fall short of the full Christian doctrine. On the one hand, Old Testament thought suggested that this conscious fellowship might be conceived as a relationship between the Father and the Spirit, the Spirit being thought of as an energising, quasi-personal "wisdom," active in the creation, and in the inspiration of the prophets. Such a view, if logically and exclusively developed, would result in an Adoptionist conception of Christ, regarding Him as a great prophet, inspired, like the others, by an indwelling of the Spirit, and exalted to a position of special nearness to

[1] This is implied also in the expression "Absolute Individuality," as applied to Him by Father Thornton in *The Incarnate Lord.*

God; a conception which would appeal to passages in the Gospels which ascribed His virgin-birth to the operation of the Spirit, described the descent of the Spirit upon Him at His baptism, and portrayed His return to Galilee "in the power of the Spirit." Such a view would have yielded a doctrine of the Godhead as consisting in a fellowship of Father and Spirit.

But, on the other hand, the whole Gospel revelation was seen to demand a recognition of Christ as supra-human, and as standing in a divine and eternal relationship to the Father, a relationship of mutual knowledge and intercourse, as expressed in His words, "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him" (St. Matt. xi, 27). This conception, again, might, in a logical and exclusive development, have led to the ignoring or minimising of the nature and work of the Spirit, according to which He would be described just as the "spirit of Jesus" (with a small s), a description which would make Him consist in nothing more than the surviving influence and inspiring memory of Christ's life on earth. Such a doctrine would have been as fatally inadequate as the other. Christ might still, as suggested above, have been worshipped as a divine Saviour, but His close intercourse with the world would have ceased at His Ascension, and there would have been none of that extension and perpetuation of His redeeming work, which has been due to the agency of the Spirit in the Church and the Sacraments.

Each of these one-sided conceptions would, indeed, have taught a certain fellowship as constituting the Divine Nature—Father and Spirit, or Father and Son; but, if either of them had permanently prevailed, the Christian religion would have been strangled at its birth; the one view would have regarded Christ as

a mere man, the other as an absentee God. Moreover, apart from considerations concerned with God's relationship to the world and mankind, belief in the divine personality of the Spirit is seen to be required when we try, humbly and reverently, to think of God in His own nature, dwelling in "the high and holy places of eternity." There, too, something more would seem to be required than the relationship of Father and Son, if the divine life is to be worthily conceived; that relationship by itself would be comparable to the subject-object self-consciousness of an individual man, raised to a higher power; and, though this subject-object relationship might yield the bare skeleton of personality, it would not be true to the conception of personal life. Personal life requires a personal environment in which the personality can be expressed. If we take the case of a self-conscious human being, and ascribe a distinct being to both the consciousness and that of which it is conscious (to the thought as well as to the thinker), we should still require someone else to share and reciprocate that, otherwise bare, fact of personality, if it is to have any real life. So, if God's nature was limited to the subject-object relationship of Father and Son, it would seem to be similarly lifeless, and to resemble Aristotle's conception of the deity as eternally and exclusively occupied in an act of self-contemplation.

The existence of the Spirit as a distinct Person within the unity of the Godhead secures the recognition of life and love and energy as belonging to the divine nature, and incidentally helps us to understand how the divine nature, thus constituted, came to express itself in the creation of human beings made in the likeness of God.

Mr. Green, in writing of the unity of God, well says: "that unity is threefold, because it is not only the capacity for being at once the subject and object

which is necessarily included in the word personality, but also that going forth in love and power which is the element that philosophy does not and indeed cannot know, but which to religion is all in all, the very Spirit of God without which the other two are nothing but the categories of an impersonal Absolute. It is the Spirit that constitutes God personal ; it is the Spirit that makes God love, and Christ grace, and ourselves one fellowship with God."[1] The Catholic doctrine, then, combines the truths contained in those half-truths, and declares that the object of our worship consists of a Trinity in Unity—of three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, united in a single Godhead. This doctrine safeguards and reconciles two essential truths about our Lord : it teaches, plainly and fully, His eternal deity, and also His perpetual presence with us through the indwelling of the Spirit. Moreover, it enables us to think intelligently of God as a Being of life and love, both in Himself from all eternity and in His relation to the world.

The " objective reference " of all Christian experience, then, is to the whole Godhead ; it expresses " a fellowship with God through Christ, mediated by the Holy Spirit."[2] And the distinctive work of the Spirit is seen to consist always in an active energy of love ; He is the *vinculum caritatis* in heaven and on earth ; He is the mighty power which grapples with the soul, transforms and renews it, speaks to it of Christ, prays its prayers within it, guides and strengthens it always according to its needs. It is through the coming of the Spirit that the Father and the Son come to us and

[1] " The Later Development of the Doctrine of the Trinity," by the Rev. F. W. Green, in *Essays on the Trinity and the Incarnation*, p. 298. I should like to express my obligations to this Essay, and to that by the Rev. K. E. Kirk on " The Evolution of the Doctrine of the Trinity," in the same volume.

[2] The words are Dr. Wheeler Robinson's, op. cit., p. 18.

make their abode with us (St. John xiv, verses 16, 18, 23). And in this matter of religious experience, with which we have been concerned, it is the Spirit who guides our aspirations after God; who disciplines and directs our wills; and who leads us into ever closer and more intimate fellowship with Christ.

University of Southern California Library

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
AT THE BOWERING PRESS, PLYMOUTH

97726

BR
110
C4

97726

Chandler, Arthur
Christian religious
experience

DATE	ISSUED TO
AP 21 '69	

Chandler
Christian

THEOLOGY LIBRARY
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AT CLAREMONT
CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA

PRINTED IN U.S.A.